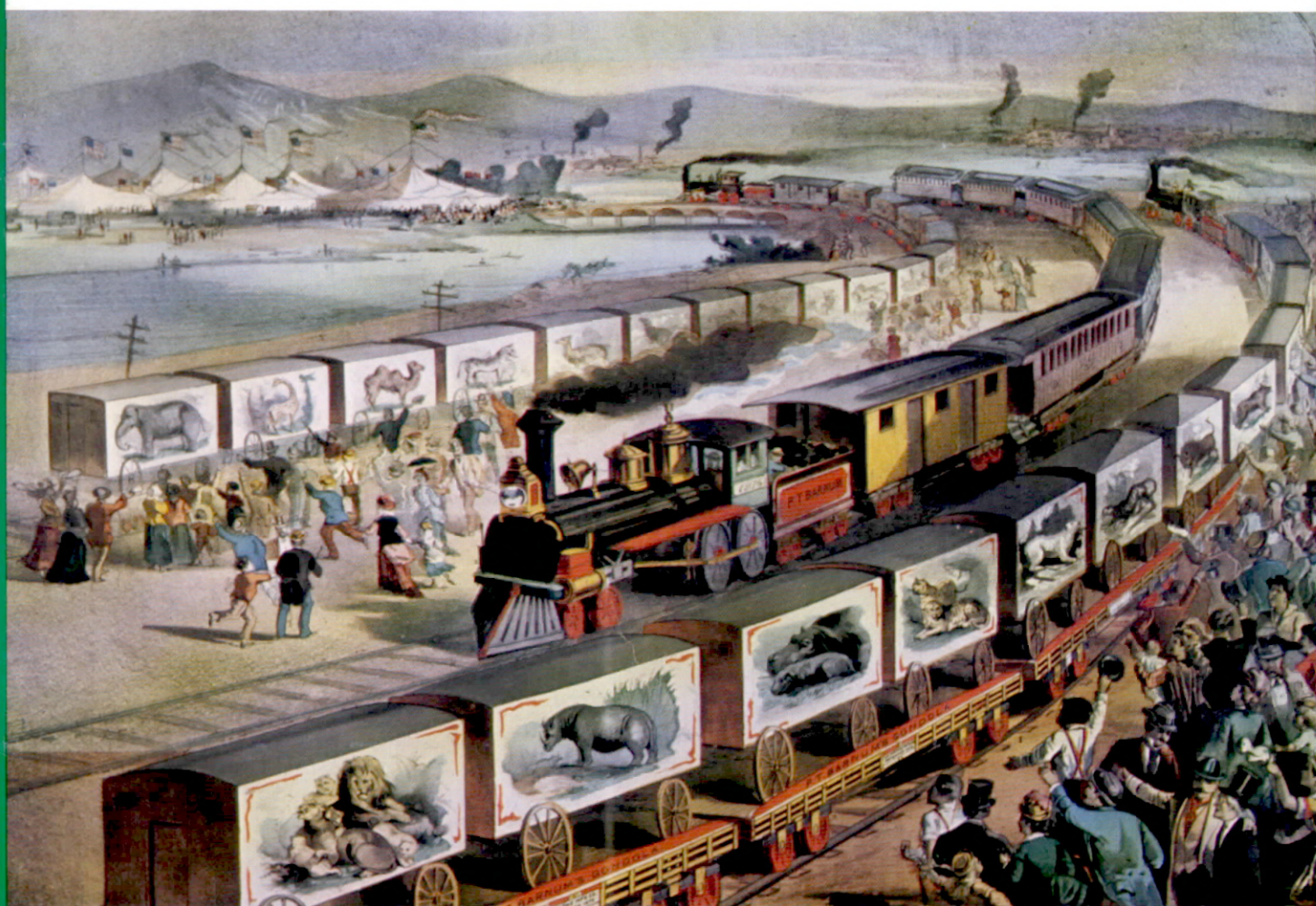


# BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## P.T. BARNUM'S



New and Greatest Show on Earth  
coming by Four Special Trains.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1983





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 27, No. 6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1983

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The exciting arrival of the P.T. Barnum circus train is portrayed in this striking lithograph prepared for the 1876 show by H.A. Thomas of New York. The unusual flat cars shown in the print are the first metal cars built for circus use. Their frames were constructed of round bars or pipe connected by blocks and straps, giving the sides a lattice appearance. The story of these unique cars will be one of the subjects covered in a future installment of Fred Dahlinger's paper "The Development of the Railroad Circus," the first section of which is printed in this issue. The original lithograph is in the Ron Richards collection.

### CHS ELECTION

The election of officers and directors of the Circus Historical Society takes place during the end of odd numbered years for two year terms. A ballot for the 1983 elec-

tion is enclosed with this issue. Only CHS members are entitled to vote. Your membership number must be shown on your ballot for your vote to be counted. *Bandwagon* subscribers are not entitled to vote.

Please mark your ballot, frank it, and return it to election commissioner Fred Dahlinger whose address is on the back of the ballot. Election results will be published in the January-February issue.

### NEW MEMBERS

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Albany, N.Y. 12205

### REINSTATED

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Batavia, New York 14020

### 1984 CHS CONVENTION

Plans are now being made for the annual Circus Historical Society convention to be held in Baraboo, Wisconsin, on May 17-20, 1984. Baraboo, well-known as the home of the Circus World Museum, will be celebrating its Ringling Centennial for it was on May 19, 1884 that the famous Ringling brothers began their circus in Baraboo. Special activities are being planned including a convention speaker of international fame and with a long and close relationship to the Ringling show and family. For further details to be announced in February, mail the post card enclosed with this issue to the CHS president.

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## THE CIRCUS WORLD OF WILLIE SELLS

By Orin C. King

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Remit to Shawnee County Historical Society  
Box 56, Topeka, KS 66601

## BARABOO PARADE IN 1984

A horse drawn circus parade will be held in Baraboo, Wisconsin, on July 7, 1984. Sponsored by the Baraboo Ringling Centennial Association, the parade will be produced and staged by the Circus World Museum.

## CWM ENDOWMENT FINISHES 1983 STRONG

Greg Parkinson, director of the Circus World Museum Library Endowment has announced that over \$80,000 has been raised the first year. The pledges and gifts contributed by members of the Circus Historical Society were significant.

## STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION as required by 39 U.S.C. 3685.

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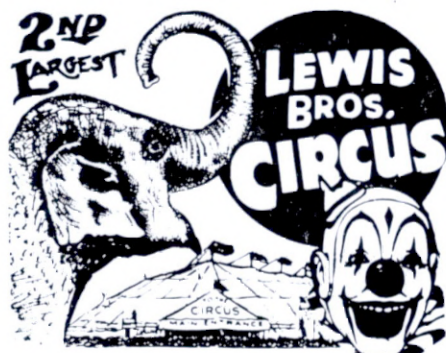
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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Publisher. (9-21-83)

## Holiday Greetings



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By Charles Philip "Chappie" Fox

Preface by Maurice Telleen, Editor, Draft Horse Journal

Foreword by Ray H. Bast, President, Percheron Horse Assoc.

In *Circus Baggage Stock*, "Chappie" Fox, one of the country's most respected authorities on circus lore, has written the definitive book on the circus draft horse. Here is a splendid pictorial history of the days when the big railroad circuses carried hundreds of mighty draft horses. Includes a chapter on the great Schlitz circus parade.

#### What reviewers are saying about *Circus Baggage Stock*:

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"Like the circus itself, it should appeal to ladies and gentlemen and children of all ages . . ." *Milwaukee Journal*

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### The Wild Animal Trainer in America

By Joanne Carol Joys

Foreword by Tom Parkinson

Few individuals have been as colorful and exciting as those who train the wild animals that perform in the circus arenas. Flamboyant and often controversial, the wild animal trainer exists in an aura of mystery.

In this outstanding new book, author Joanne Joys traces the role of the wild animal trainer in America from the early 19th Century to the present, examining the lore that surrounds these individuals, and the reasons why they are viewed as either heroes, villains or fools. The book also looks at the pros and cons of wild animal acts and the controversy surrounding them.

In his Foreword to *The Wild Animal Trainer in America*, noted circus authority Tom Parkinson observes that the author reveals a "... good appreciation of circus history and operation. Adding her own specialized research, interviews, and observations, she presents qualifications perhaps unmatched among those who have commented about wild animal trainers and their unique circle in the circus world . . ."

8 1/2 X 11 format. 352 pages, with over 300 illustrations, including 8 pages of spectacular full color. Hardcover, \$39.95



# The Development of the Railroad Circus

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

## Part One

The highlights of this paper were presented at the 1983 Circus Historical Society Convention.

### Foreward

The two technological innovations which have had the greatest impact on the American circus are the use of the tent to house the performance and adoption of the railroad to transport the show. Only recently has the date of the first use of tents been critically established, and the subject still lacks the wider treatment it deserves.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the early use of railroads to transport circuses has received limited analytical treatment, the available accounts concentrating primarily on the post 1920 period when the techniques and equipment were already refined and their use documented in photographs. Discussion of the formative years of the railroad circus is generally limited to the presentation of the W.C. Coup account in an uncritical fashion, corroborated by a few readily available illustrations of dubious reliability.<sup>2</sup> As a prelude to the primary subject of this paper, several aspects of these pre-1872 railroad circuses will be reviewed in order that a critical assessment of the importance of the 1872 Barnum railer may be made.

The principal task of this paper is to examine the development of the technology of the railroad circus, primarily as illustrated by the history of the Barnum show train. Between 1872, when it first went on rails, and 1897, when the show went to Europe, the Barnum show's train underwent significant changes and improvements. Starting as a motley conglomeration of leased system cars measuring twenty to thirty feet long, it evolved into a state of the art set of 60 foot cars, the longest in show business, and tripled in length from approximately 1200 feet to over 3600 feet. The six different managements which guided the show ordered cars from at least five different builders. The train incorporated several innovations and was upgraded as other showmen introduced improved equipment. Although the history of this particular train is the thread which ties the paper together, numerous asides concerning advances or practices of other car builders and showmen have been incorporated to provide as complete a story as reasonably possible.

The length of this paper requires that it be split into several parts. Supporting notes will be printed with each


section, with a summation of credits to be printed with the final installment.

### The Pre-1872 Railroad Circus

The transformation of the 1871 P.T. Barnum overland circus into a railroad show is an event whose true significance has been misunderstood since the beginnings of circus historiography. While the 1872 Barnum show was not the first circus to move by rail, it does represent the turning point in what the phrase "railroad circus" meant. In order to appreciate the nature of this change, it is necessary to understand exactly what a railroad circus represented prior to 1872.

The novelty of a circus traveling by rail was usually given top billing by railroad circuses of the 1850's. This 1855 ad for the Horner & Bell great Western Railroad Circus used a cut similar to those found in regular railroad advertisements of the period. John Polacsek collection.

**GREAT WESTERN**



**Rail Road Circus.**

ORGANIZED FOR THE

**Travelling Season of 1855!**

**HORNER & BELL, - - - PROPRIETORS.**

WM LIBBY, Ring Master.  
O. BELL, Equestrian Manager,  
PUSS HORNER, Clown.

THIS ELEGANT EQUESTRIAN TROUPE is composed of the best Riders, Gymnasts and Acrobats in the United States, and the Manager, with a desire to give entire and general satisfaction, has spared no expense to make this unequalled by any Company now traveling.

Among the performers are:

OLIVER BELL in his great principal Acts, acknowledged by all to be surpassed by none in his profession.

MR. LIBBY, the American Hercules.

MR. KELLY, the great Posturer, in several new and pleasing Acts.

LA PERCHE EQUIPOISE, by Messrs. LIBBY & KELLY.

WASH. CHAMBERS, the far-famed Scene Rider.

FRANK LYNCH, the celebrated Banjo Player from Christy's New York Troupe, will appear and play several new and favorite airs.

Headed these are

C. CARL.	W. STERLING.	W. JONES.
MR. MARKS.	J. KELLY.	G. SMITH.

AND

**MADAME OLINZA,**

The famous ROPE DANCER, from the Amphitheaters of Paris. This lady has no equal in her profession, making most perilous ascensions on a single rope to the top of the Canvass. She will also appear and dance several FANCY DANCES on the Rope, besides playing a SOLO on the BUGLE, &c., &c.

The Feats in the Ring will be interspersed with the Witicisms of the Clowns, their hits at the times, satirical banter, pungent sarcasms, and never failing humor, that have won for them the title of being Princes among the Jesters.

The whole will exhibit

At **Cynthiana, Tuesday, Sept. 4th, 1855.**  
At **Franklin, Wednesday, .. 5th.**  
At **Paris, Monday, .. 3d.**

Afternoon and Evening. Doors open at 2 and 7 P. M.—Performance to commence half an hour after the doors are open. **ADMISSION FIFTY CENTS.** Children and Servants half price.

A. C. THORP, Agent.

The earliest record of a circus troupe moving by rail is contained in the memoir of John H. Glenroy, a prominent bareback rider, who was a member of the overland troupe managed by Charles Bacon and Edward Derious in 1838. In December of that year, parts of the show moved from Forsyth to Macon, Georgia, over a railroad which had recently opened. Glenroy wrote "some of the company" were the rail pioneers, inferring the remainder of the show, including the equipment, made the jump in the normal manner, by wagons.<sup>3</sup> Similar rail moves were made by other troupes of which Glenroy was a member in 1839, 1845 and 1850.<sup>4</sup> It is probable that well heeled groups of performers frequently traveled by rail between engagements, thereby avoiding the tiresome and weary overland journey. Such moves were possible only when a rail line existed between consecutive dates.

The first serious effort to create a bonafide "railroad circus" took place in the middle 1850's. Between 1853 and 1857 a group of showmen, of whom Gilbert R. Spalding and Charles J. Rogers were the most prominent members, operated what is generally considered to be the first railroad circus. The most unusual aspect of this early railer was the string of nine cars on which the show traveled. They were built by James E. Gould of Albany, New York, a well known contemporary car builder. The vehicles traveled by railroad between engagements, but were removed from the tracks and taken overland to the lot where their contents were unloaded. The cars were probably four wheel hybrid vehicles, incorporating the features of both dray wagons and railway freight cars. They may have been low sided stubby gondolas, equipped with spoked wheels having wide tires and flanges which allowed the cars to be used on railroad track or over roads.

The fact that a circus had arranged for the construction of its own cars to be used on a railroad was not an unusual action in the 1850's. Railroads had exhibited a marked dislike for furnishing the capital necessary to build anything but the most utilitarian freight cars, leaving the design and experimentation with new cars to private individuals and firms. Carrying the point to the extreme, some early railroads were founded on the false premise that they would supply the track and locomotive, the shippers to supply the cars to carry their goods.<sup>5</sup>



Spalding and Rogers' railer moved on 24 cars in 1857, but in 1858 they dropped the railroad format and returned to traveling by wagons.<sup>8</sup> Only conjecture can be offered to explain the failure of the railroad setup, but Glenroy remarked upon one aspect of the early railers which may be pertinent here. He stated that "for years after railways had been opened, very little circus carrying was done by them, as it was less expensive to move the circus over the road than to send it by rail."<sup>7</sup> The country had experienced economic upheaval in 1857, the result of which may have been the lack of adequate funds to support a railroad operation in 1858. Spalding and Rogers' efforts enlightened other showmen to some of the advantages of rail operation, not the least of which was the significant reduction in wear and tear on both man and beast. The advent of the Civil War interrupted the plans some proprietors may have had to ride the rails, but by the late 1860's numerous shows made both single jumps and extended movements by rail.

During the 1860's the phrases "railroad show" and "railroad circus" came into common use, the terms used to differentiate the shows which traveled by rail from those which traveled overland. There was good reason for this differentiation because the typical rail show was inferior to the usual overland circus. Not until 1872 could a railroad circus boast that it had broken the bonds which caused the name "railroad show" to be used in a derogatory fashion.

The typical railroad circus of the 1860's was what would be called a gilley show today, the term gilley defining the transportation of the show properties from the train to the lot by manual labor, usually augmented by knockdown or rented dray wagons. Equipment such as tents, poles, and seating was loaded into boxcars, animals into cattle cars and personnel into day coaches. The latter were converted into crude sleepers by laying planks across the seat cushions and tops.<sup>8</sup> Movement of the equipment was a labor intensive process, each article being rehandled several times in the unloading and loading processes. All of the properties were carried through side doors into the box cars, the direction of these activities being on an axis which was perpendicular to the track the car rode upon.

There appears to have been two primary reasons for the inferior status of early railroad circuses, both being somewhat complementary. First, the circus did not know how to fully utilize the railroad, in particular it did not have a method which allowed for quick and reproducible scheduled movements. The technology remained undeveloped until showmen had stum-

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*AT SALEM,*  
**ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY,**  
JUNE 25th and 26th,  
**NEAR GROCE'S CORNER.**

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**SPALDING & ROGERS'**  
**NEW**  
**RAILROAD**  
**CIRCUS.**

Will be exhibited as above, at 14 and 74 P.M., with NINE of  
**THEIR OWN CARS!**  
(Conveying their People, Horses and Properties,) so constructed as to be taken daily

*From the Track to the Tent*  
NO MORE  
**Skeleton Team Horses**  
**RICKETY WAGONS**  
**Tarnished Trappings**  
**WORN OUT RING HORSES**  
**TIRED PERFORMERS**  
As with the Old Foggy Wagon Shows, traveling all night over rough roads, &c.

**Fast Men! Fast Women!**  
**FAST CHILDREN! and**  
**FAST HORSES**  
To keep up with the times, with  
**Performers well Rested!**  
**Ring Horses of Spirit, and**  
**TRAPPINGS LUSTROUS!**  
**ALL THE WINNERS**  
Of all the Prizes at the Great  
**CIRCUS TOURNAMENT!**  
At Washington, in which the  
Principal Performers in the  
Country met in a  
**GRAND TRIAL OF SKILL!**  
AND INCLUDING, OF COURSE,  
**The Best in the World!**  
In every Department of the  
Circus Business, are with the  
New Show. See what a bewildering  
**ARRAY OF GREAT NAMES!**  
**JAMES ROBINSON**, of S. C., who won the Prize as the  
*'Best Single Bareback Rider.'*  
**The Levater Lee Troupe!**  
Mad. LEVATER LEE,  
Mlle AUGUSTA LEE,  
Mlle ROSA LEE,  
Mons. LEVATER LEE,  
Young JOHN LEE,  
Young STEVE LEE,  
OF LONDON AND PARIS,  
Decided to be the *'Best Pantomimists, Pasturers, &c.'*  
**PUSS HORNOR**, of Ky., the  
*'Best Talking Clown.'* The  
**American Brothers!**

Spalding and Rogers aggressively proclaimed they were a railroad circus in 1856, and stated their case for the superiority of rail over wagon transportation in the text of the ad. Pfening Archives.

bled with the gilley show format for more than a decade. Second, the railroads could not properly handle circus movements, particularly in areas where the rail system was a patchwork affair of numerous lines having different gauges.

In one of the best first hand accounts of circus operations of the 1860's, George Conklin recalled that

shows traveling by rail frequently were required to change cars as they moved from railroad to railroad, a difference in gauge preventing interchange of cars. Conklin remembered suffering through two transfers in the same night, the shifting of cars generally taking place during the middle of the night when most circus employees were trying to take a well deserved rest. Giving due consideration to these interruptions, Conklin still believed rail operation offered more opportunities to sleep than did overland shows.<sup>9</sup> In addition to causing a change of cars, the inability to pass cars unimpeded from one road to another also delayed the introduction of circus owned trains until after a common gauge had been adopted by most railroads.<sup>10</sup>

The circus' inability to exploit rail travel coupled with the railroad system's lack of development caused showmen to downsize their shows to a level which could survive under these restrictive conditions. Virtually everything which was not necessary to house and execute the performance in the big top was eliminated, including the parade, the menagerie and the museum or sideshow. This self-imposed downsizing led to the popular conception that the rail show delivered less for the price of admission than the overland circus. This popular opinion gave rise to the use of notices such as "This is no Railroad Show" in the 1871 Sheldenberger show ads, a statement made to assure the public they would be getting their money's worth. Montgomery Queen pointed out his circus was not to be confused with Mike Lipman's Queen City Circus in 1872, because Lipman's outfit was a railroad show without a menagerie.<sup>11</sup>

An interesting example of the competition between overland and rail circuses occurred in 1871, when the Bowles Wootten and Andrew Haight New York circus, a rail show, day and dated John V. "Pogey" O'Brien's Sheldenberger wagon outfit. The *Clipper* account noted "The New York circus, being a railroad show, did not make any display [i.e. parade], but the Sheldenberger show 'came in strong.'" O'Brien washed his cages and distributed new uniforms and flags in order to maximize the advantage of his free feature.<sup>12</sup> The 1874 Maginley & Co. show, another O'Brien operation, advertised "It costs no more to visit this immense Establishment than is demanded by a small and inferior railroad circus," a confirmation of the reputation which railroad shows had earned.<sup>13</sup>

One of the primary hallmarks of the early railroad circus was acknowledged beginning in the mid 1850's. The 1854 Den Stone rail show advertised that it did not waste any money on an outside parade, and did not of-



Except for the larger switching yards, spur tracks in cities and towns were generally located adjacent to the depot, close by the agents who conducted the railroads' business. Circus trains were spotted on these sidings for unloading. The lack of baggage wagons and a desire to avoid payments to local teamsters led early rail show proprietors to seek lots near the depot. This choice of locations minimized the

Combine some of the most celebrated performers in this or any other country.

**F N** The American exhibition will be found especially interesting as showing them in the evening, and will be especially adapted to the comfort and convenience of family parties, ladies and children; and as the GREAT SHOW remains but ONE DAY, the American Exhibition should be seen on the same day.

**THE SCHEDULE** will be as follows:—**WEDNESDAY**, Sept. 16th; at Salem, **MONDAY**, Sept. 16th; at New York, **THURSDAY**, Sept. 16th; at Portsmouth, **SEPT. 16th**.

**ADMISSION**—Box, 25 cents. Admission, 10 cents. Children under 10 years of age in all parts of the Fair Ground, 10 cents. **Banner the Day and Even.** For particulars see large Bill, Lithograph, &c.

**PRICES**—**Box**, 25 cents. **Admission**, 10 cents. **Children**, 5 cents. **Warner** General Agent.

PAGE 8 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1983



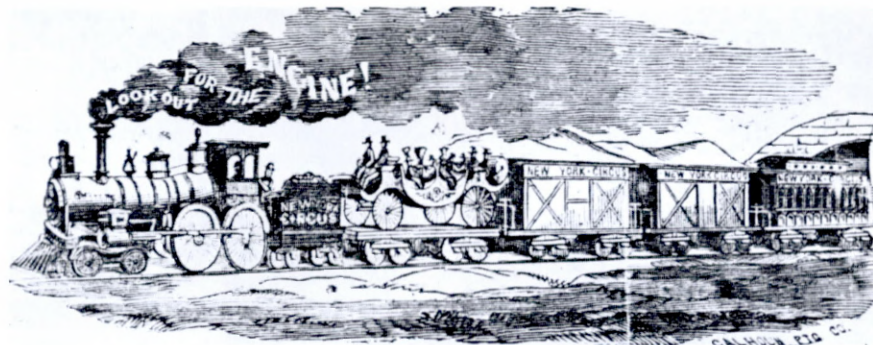
car, the lead end becoming lodged in the wall of the tunnel through which the train passed. The jamming action snapped the pole after the cars had been given a terrific jolt.<sup>29</sup>

Although flat car circus technology did not develop until the 1870's, many shows successfully used railroads in the 1860's to their benefit. The ability of the railroads to move a show long distances in comparatively short times was acknowledged early. Overland show owners often utilized the railroads to move from winter-quarters to a prime area for the opening, to shift from a bad area to a good area, to escape competition, and to move from the closing date back to winter-quarters. These jumps were not movements of the show in an abbreviated format, but basically consisted of mounting an overland circus on railroad cars. Typical of such moves was the shipment of the Adam Forepaugh show from Philadelphia to Washington in 1871, the operation requiring the use of fifty platform cars. The elephants and camels were driven overland, but how the horses were moved was not stated.<sup>30</sup> The significance of the Forepaugh move is that a large overland show could move by rail on a spot basis, but to move such an institution on a daily basis awaited the development of a complete railroad method.

The execution of a performance in one town, followed by a long rail jump and a performance in another city the next day merited special notice. H.C. Lee's Atlantic and Pacific show accomplished this in 1871, showing in Reno and Elko, Nevada on consecutive days, a 300 mile jump on the Central Pacific Railroad separating the dates. An example of the long home run by rail was the Cole show move from Texas to Quincy, Illinois in October 1874.<sup>31</sup>

Another typical maneuver was to play the route of the railroad, using the cars of their host to move from town to town along the line, visiting settlements which existed as a result of the railroad's presence. This was the practice of the 1870 Huff & Co. Metropolitan Circus which played along the Cincinnati and Lafayette Railroad, and the 1870 DeHaven show, which exhibited by the tracks of the Iron Mountain Railroad.<sup>32</sup> The

This remarkable photograph of a load of Concord stagecoaches conveys some idea of the appearance of an overland cir-



The early L.B. Lent circus train may have had only one flat car to carry the show's bandchariot as this well known 1866 engraving shows. Lent was one of

James Robinson Circus showed along the Union Pacific Railroad in 1872 and the Atlantic and Pacific show announced it would tour up and down the various branches of the railroads in the interior of Texas the same year.<sup>33</sup>

The transcontinental tour of the 1869 Dan Castello circus combined several of the operating modes described above while avoiding others. It exhibited along the route of the railroad, the tracks having provided a direct path to many pockets of western civilization. The show disembarked from the railroad several times and journeyed overland to visit a few larger cities. Some of the show's baggage wagons and road stock may have been retained to facilitate these special movements, but it is more likely local liveries supplied the necessary teams and wagons. A fine bandchariot headed the parade the Castello show staged, followed by costumed performers on horseback and several menagerie cages. There are conflicting reports concerning the merits of the show's menagerie, but it did include two elephants, several cages and some lead stock, making it the biggest annex of this type on a pre-1872 railroad show.

While the Castello circus embodied some of the elements which would comprise the features of the 1872 Barnum railer, the 1869 show was a small affair traveling on only eight railroad cars. It did good business at numerous stands but the tour was apparently a failure because the circus was sold

cus mounted on flat cars. Taken on April 15, 1868, the scale of the view makes it impossible to determine the method

the first showmen to make extensive use of the railroad for daily show movements, but his circus was a gilley show, and not a true flat car operation.

after a short overland season in California.

Castello joined W.C. Coup in putting out a Great Lakes boat show in 1870 which later traveled overland. He was one of the partners in the 1871 Barnum show and was the only principal member who had prior railroad experience. His name cannot be found in any accounts which describe the placement of the Barnum show on rails in 1872, possibly because he did not make a major contribution to the development of the new type of railroad circus. His background was on the small gilley type railroad circus, a type of operation not capable of being scaled up to the vast size of the Barnum enterprise.<sup>34</sup>

Although no photographs of the pre-1872 overland circuses traveling by rail are known to exist, the spirit of these operations can be obtained from the inspection of a rare photograph in the New Hampshire Historical Society. The view recorded the departure of thirty Abbott, Downing & Co. stagecoaches, loaded on fifteen system flat cars, just outside the Concord, New Hampshire, railroad yard on April 15, 1868. The stages appear to have been medium sized nine passenger models, which measured about thirteen feet long, placing the flats in the range of twenty five to thirty feet long. This dated photograph is important because it proves that piggyback shipments were definitely in use prior to the advent of the 1872 Barnum railroad circus. Whether this loading method originated out of Civil War

used to secure the stagecoaches to the flats. New Hampshire Historical Society collection.





## STICKNEY'S RAILROAD CIRCUS!!

FROM NEW YORK,



Will Exhibit at Newburyport  
**THURSDAY, May 27th,**  
Afternoon and Evening.

THE ONLY CIRCUS THAT WILL VISIT  
THIS CITY THIS SUMMER!

**NO OUTSIDE PAGEANT.**

Our Rivals make Processions,  
**WE GIVE THE SHOW!**

**The Best Organized Circus in  
America!**

Ads used by the 1869 Stickney railroad show tried to convince readers that the deletion of the parade meant a stronger performance. Contemporary accounts generally do not support this contention. Pfening Archives.

equipment shipments remains to be verified.

### Two Prominent Rail Shows

Of all the pre-1872 railroad shows perhaps the best known are the rail operations of Lewis B. Lent and James Robinson.<sup>36</sup> Lent's circus was a typical railroad show, operated as a gillye outfit using system railroad cars. In an assessment of the American circus industry in the March 12, 1882 *New York Times*, an anonymous writer credited L.B. Lent with the adoption of rail travel. Although he incorrectly dated the year as 1860, instead of 1866, the author noted "the innovation was an important one, and the other circuses were eventually compelled to follow." Just as the importance of the 1872 Barnum rail show has been misjudged, this writer gave too much credit to Lent. Other shows traveled by rail a decade prior to Lent's efforts, and there was no great rush to universally adopt rail travel after Lent toured his 1866 rail circus. If Lent is due any credit, it would be for his use of the railroads for a continuous six year period before the Barnum railer, pro-

ving that a gillye rail show could be transported daily in a profitable manner. The scribe also noted Lent's original train consisted of 12 cars and that they had no menagerie, but did put on an excellent performance in the tent, observations confirmed by contemporary newspaper reviews.

Although heralded in later years as an important action, the movement of the Lent show on rails in 1866 merited little attention in the show's own advertisements, receiving but a one line mention in the show ads. The decision to minimize publicity of rail movements was undoubtedly due to the low opinion of these shows. Although it was the best known rail show, the Lent circus traded on the quality of its ring performance to overcome the general disrepute of the typical rail show.

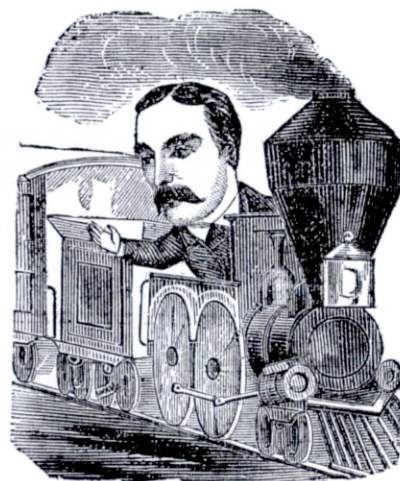
The familiar train engraving used in the show's ads as early as 1866 shows one flat car for a light bandchariot, two box cars for the equipment and one passenger car. Three freight cars may have been adequate to carry the show, a number of later "two car" shows being carried in two railroad vehicles measuring sixty or seventy feet long, the equal of four to six cars in the 1870's.<sup>36</sup> Lent used at least one box car in his consist, for such a car burned at Ottawa, Kansas on August 1, 1872, destroying much of the company's personal effects and the band's fancy uniforms.<sup>37</sup>

In 1866 the show carried a light bandchariot, one which could have been gillyed off a flat car. The Lent show did not parade in 1869, and in later years it appears the parade consisted primarily of an exceptionally fine Fielding bandchariot pulled by an elaborate 24 horse hitch, a team of 12 ponies and the ring artists on horseback. The show did not carry the cages or tableaux found in other overland show parades.

Lacking a menagerie and giving an abbreviated parade, Lent dismissed other show annexes with the statement "No catch penny Side Shows are allowed with this establishment."<sup>38</sup> Advance notices in 1870 proclaimed the absence of offensive animals exhibits, sideshows and organ grinders.<sup>39</sup> Not until 1871 did the show carry an exotic animal feature, a monkey or ape billed as a *Cynocephalus*, which performed a riding routine in the ring.

The Lent show was pushed into the background by the advent of the 1872 Barnum rail circus, leading Lent to mimic his competitor. He enlarged his show for 1873, adding a menagerie and a sideshow in addition to putting on a complete parade. He then called attention to the seven mastadonic exhibitions in the six colossal canvases, the 30 cage menagerie, the metropolitan museum and the big parade

## JOHN H. MURRAY'S GREAT Railroad Circus!



WILL EXHIBIT AT

**MANCHESTER,**  
**Tuesday, July 6, 1875,**  
**AFTERNOON and EVENING.**

Combining in its organization the  
**BEST ARTISTS OF BOTH  
HEMISPHERES.**

MR. MURRAY, during his late  
**TOUR OF EUROPE,**  
SELECTED THE  
Most Accomplished Performers  
FROM  
**HENGLER'S, BATTY'S & ADAMS'**  
**Great English Circuses**

Freight cars did not make an appealing subject, but a balloon stack locomotive billowing black smoke and driven by a larger than life circus man was sure to catch the readers' attention. This 1875 John H. Murray ad was a forerunner to the "Thundering Trains" style circus train lithographs of the 1930's. Notice that only the big show performance is mentioned, indicating the show was probably a gillye operation. Pfening Archives.

which included the fine bandchariot, ponies, bannered vehicles and the 30 cages.<sup>40</sup> Lent advertised his show traveled by "double special railroad excursion train," probably indicating it was in the 20 to 40 car class. The show advertised 60 car loads of curiosities, but confirmation of this total has yet to be located. There is no indication that Lent ever made an attempt



to buy his own cars, advertising that his show traveled on "special trains chartered for the purpose."<sup>41</sup>

Ads used in 1874 made no mention of any attractions other than the big show and the 25 member band. The enlargement of the show proved Lent's undoing, effects of the panic of 1873 leading to his loss of ownership and the closing of the show in mid 1876.

The main attraction of Lent's 1866 show was James Robinson, a bareback rider regarded as one of the greatest to ever mount a horse. Ten years before, the pioneering Spalding & Rogers Railroad Circus had also employed Robinson as their featured star.<sup>42</sup> With Frank Howes as a partner, Robinson operated a railroad circus in 1864, and the James Robinson show of 1869 to 1872 operated for at least the last two years on rails.

Robinson's last railer was typical of the genre, eliminating the parade in favor of an easier to handle free attraction, a balloon ascension. The reason given for the switch was that the troupe traveled by rail "and so do not pretend to give a gorgeous street procession."<sup>43</sup> Show prepared write-ups also cited rail travel to justify the absence of the usual number of baggage wagons, vehicles which towners normally would have seen in the daily parades. Processions, which were given, were minimal by the show's own assessment, "but all the animals in it will be seen at the performance," an indication that there was no menagerie and that the ring stock comprised the animal portion of the parade.<sup>44</sup>

The rail mode of operation continued in 1872, the train cars being "day and night coaches" for the personnel and "elegant stock cars to transport [the] valuable ring stock and costly chariot." By far the most interesting aspect of Robinson's advertising was his statement that "Barnum, the greatest showman, has imitated the example of Mr. Robinson, and adopted the railroad system."<sup>45</sup> The success of some contemporary railroad circuses no doubt influenced the Barnum show managers, but their efforts in this direction represented a step forward in both size and concept compared to rail shows typified by those of L.B. Lent and James Robinson.

The subtle change in the terms "railroad circus" and "railroad show" was quickly forgotten by most people as the flat car type shows began to represent the term. The last reference to the original meaning which we have found is in a letter from old time showman George H. Irving printed in the March 20, 1920 *Billboard*. Irving noted that in 1874 he was on the Maginley show which day and dated the L.B. Lent circus at Bath, Maine. He noted Lent's operation was just a

circus and had no menagerie, referring to it as a railroad show.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Stuart Thayer, *Annals of the American Circus* (Manchester, Michigan: the author, 1976), p. 154, establishes 1825 as the year in which the tent, or pavilion as it was then called, was first used by a circus.
2. An exception is a little known but worthwhile paper on the subject, C.G. Sturtevant's "Evolution of Circus Transportation" in *Billboard*, March 23, 1929, pp. 58-59.
3. John H. Glenroy, *Ins and Outs of Circus Life* (Boston: M.M. Wing, 1885), p. 20.
4. Glenroy, pp. 21, 57 and 78.
5. Louis D.H. Weld, "Private Freight Cars and American Railways" *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908) v. 31, pp. 1-185, is the finest review of the pre-1900 development of the private railroad car industry.
6. Toledo (Oh.) *Blade*, July 25, 1857.
7. Glenroy, p. 6.
8. George Conklin, *The Ways of the Circus* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1921), p. 83, specifies the makeup of these early sleepers.
9. Ibid.
10. George Rodgers Taylor and Irene D. Neu, *The American Railroad Network 1861-1890* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956) is the best study of the developments leading to a common gauge. Of particular interest is a series of maps detailing the railroads and gauges comprising the rail network in the U.S. in 1861.
11. *New York Clipper*, February 8, 1873, p. 359. Hereafter abbreviated as *Clipper*.
12. *Clipper*, May 27, 1871, p. 62.
13. Herald for an 1874 date in Newfoundland, Canada.
14. Ad in Jackson (Mi.) *American Citizen*, June 14, 1854.
15. Circus World Museum.
16. Ad for May 27, 1869 date at Newburyport, Ma., Pfening Archives.
17. Ad for July 20, 1870 date at Newburyport, Ma., Pfening Archives.
18. *Clipper*, October 4, 1861, p. 199.
19. *Clipper*, May 20, 1865, p. 47.
20. *Clipper*, January 6, 1866, p. 311.
21. *Clipper*, October 1, 1870, p. 207.
22. *Clipper*, October 5, 1872, p. 239.
23. *Clipper*, October 26, 1872, p. 239.
24. Evansville (In.) *Daily Journal*, August 12, 1869; *Janesville (Wl.) Gazette*, July 11, 1871.
25. *Clipper*, May 17, 1873, p. 51.
26. Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, July 1, 1872.
27. Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, July 1, 1872; *Scientific American Supplement*, VII, 186 (July 26, 1879), p. 2965.
28. *Clipper*, June 7, 1879, p. 87.
29. Glenroy, p. 135.
30. *Clipper*, April 8, 1871, p. 7; April 15, 1871, p. 15.
31. *Clipper*, October 10, 1874, p. 223.
32. *Clipper*, July 16, 1870, p. 119.
33. *Clipper*, April 13, 1872, p. 15; February 24, 1872, p. 375.
34. The best account of Castello's career is Gordon Yaden's "Daniel A. Castello" in *Bannerline*, March 16, 1968, pp. 2-12. Yaden reported Castello moved an overland circus by rails as early as 1864. The 1869 tour is covered in "Dan Castello's Circus, Menagerie & Abyssinian Caravan" in *Bannerline*, June 1, 1969, pp. 3-15. While neither piece is documented, they are generally based on primary sources and do not include the many errors found in other biographies of Castello.
35. Copland MacAllister, "The First Successful Railroad Circus Was In 1866," *Bandwagon*, XIV, 4, pp. 14-16, brought renewed interest

in Lent's rail show; however, MacAllister did not identify the true nature of Lent's rail operation.

36. The best available reference on these interesting two car shows is Bill Elbirt's "The Last of the Baggage Car Shows," in *White Tops*, XXXVI, 2, pp. 3-8. Although a reasonable sized show was jammed into their vehicles, the two car shows did not draw any attention to their train for fear the public would judge the size of the show based upon seeing only two cars.
37. *Clipper*, August 17, 1872, p. 159.
38. Ad for September 5, 1867 date at Waltham, Ma. Circus World Museum.
39. Toledo (Oh.) *Blade*, June 28, 1870.
40. Ad for July 31, 1873 date at LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Circus World Museum.
41. Ad in Worcester Gazette, May 2, 1868.
42. An 1856 Spalding & Rogers courier at the New York Historical Society lists Robinson as the featured rider. Lent's 1866 newspaper ads place him in the same capacity.
43. *Clipper*, September 2, 1871, p. 175.
44. Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, May 10, 1871, p. 4.
45. Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, July 1, 1872.

## DAN. CASTELLO'S

### GREAT SHOW!



**CIRCUS, MENAGERIE AND ABYSSINIAN CARAVAN!**

WILL EXHIBIT AT  
DENVER, FRIDAY, SATURDAY AND MONDAY,  
JUNE Fourth, Fifth and Seventh.

Admission One Dollar and Fifty Cents, Children under Twelve years of age, One Dollar.

Two Performances each Day, Afternoon and Night.

Exhibition under one Caravan and One Price of Admission.

AMUSEMENT AND PLEASURE,  
Combined with Instruction.  
GRATUITOUS STREET PAGEANT.  
In this Grand Caravan and Moving Picture will appear the  
**GOLDEN CHARIOT OF THEODORE**  
KING OF ABYSSINIA.

**THE MENAGERIE**

Possessor of a varied and very fine Zoological Collection, comprising  
The Harrest and Most Beautiful Wild Beasts,  
BIRDS  
AND  
REPTILES

From every nation of the world, the variety and superiority of which is never  
exceeded and is unsurpassed. It contains the most wonderful  
specimens of

**TWO PERFORMING ELEPHANTS,**  
JENNY LIND, PERFORMED BY PROF. HARRI, AND THE  
BABY ELEPHANT ONLY 18 HOURS IN WEIGHT.

Will be introduced into the city by Mr. Dan Castello, and after the presentation  
opportunity to visit, in A.D. 1874, the first of its kind.

Enter the Show of  
**TRAINED LIONS, TIGERS, LEOPARDS, &c. &c.**

Dan Castello made no mention of being on rails in this newspaper ad for his 1869 circus which made a transcontinental tour. Circus World Museum Collection.





Best Holiday Wishes  
from the entire  
Carson & Barnes Family  
D.R. & Isla Miller  
Geary & Barbara Byrd



The Harvey Phillips Foundation  
presents

**MERLE EVANS**  
AND HIS

# CIRCUS CONCERT BAND

AT  
CARNEGIE HALL

*A Tribute to American Circus Heritage  
Honoring the Legendary Bandmaster, Merle Evans*

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 29th, 1984**

**2:30 P.M.**

**CARNEGIE HALL, NYC**

Thrill once again to the sounds of America's favorite entertainment, as the complete concert band, under the direction of Maestro Evans, presents musical magic that stimulates the senses, incites the imagination and recaptures reminiscent reminders of the spectacle called circus. As the "Toscanini of the Big Top" takes center ring, a hush of anticipation descends on the audience. The air is filled with an Evan's fanfare and the shrill sound of the Ringmaster's whistle, and no longer are you seated in the magnificence of Carnegie Hall. Your mind's eye has transformed this edifice, beloved as the world's musical showcase, into a dazzling spectacle of tanbark and tinsel. Come and share the fond memories of bygone days, forever embedded in your heart. Now is the moment to become a part of this event! In the tradition and spirit of circus and its musical heritage, this concert will initiate, as a living tribute to Merle Evans, a program designed to provide scholarships to deserving musical students; that these students will, in turn, agree to dedicate part of their education to furthering awareness throughout the musical community of the importance of preserving and fostering the glory and grandeur we all know as "stirring strains from spangland".

**CONCERT PRODUCED BY A. BRIAN LIDICOAT**

Order your seats now for best choice!

...By Mail: Fill in this form completely, indicating your seating preference, and return this form with payment and a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

**CARNEGIE HALL BOX OFFICE**

**881 Seventh Avenue  
New York, NY 10019**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Payment enclosed (make check payable to:

CARNEGIE HALL BOX OFFICE)

Please charge my \_\_\_\_\_ VISA \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_ American Express

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone number ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature as on credit card \_\_\_\_\_

Location Number x Price = Total

Parquet : \_\_\_\_\_ @ 18.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

1st Tier

Box : \_\_\_\_\_ @ 18.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Tier

Box : \_\_\_\_\_ @ 15.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

Dress

Circle : \_\_\_\_\_ @ 15.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

Front

Balcony : \_\_\_\_\_ @ 12.50 = \_\_\_\_\_

Rear

Balcony : \_\_\_\_\_ @ 10.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MERLE EVANS

CONCERT

1/29/84

...To Charge Tickets By Phone: call CARNEGIE CHARGE, (212) 247-7459, Monday thru Saturday. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For further information write or call: A. Brian Liddicoat

Barn Road, Deep River, CT 06417

(203) 526-2271





# Season's Greetings

FROM

## RINGLING MUSEUM OF THE CIRCUS

OF THE

### JOHN AND MABLE RINGLING MUSEUM OF ART

IN

### SARASOTA, FLORIDA



## Season's Greetings



*Joseph Andrew Rowe Tent No. 6  
Los Angeles*

John Buthman, President

Jane Conley, Secretary

Haskell E. Harr, Vice President

Joseph Arce, Ara Avak, Ellen Avak, Susan Avak, Randy Barker, Mark Bayuk, Guenther Becker, Gene Boyer, Nancy Boyer, James Brown, Sonia Brown, Hunt Bushnell, John Buthman, Fred Canfield, James Conley, Jane Conley, Louis M. Connor, Jr., James De Piro, Lillian Goldstick, George W. Hall, Al Halperin, Harold E. Hamlyn, Carol Hammer, Haskell E. Harr, Ray Harris, Oscar V. Jacobson, Rodney Kelley, Fred Kingdon, Perry Luth, Zelma Miles, June Moreland, Mark Nielsen, Thomas W. Power, Fifi Reed, Fred Reed, Chang Reynolds, John Rooney, Dorothy Smith, Herbert Smith, Col. Earle W. Tegge, Rich Trueblood, John Tucker, Mary Webb, Del Wentworth, Emma Wentworth, William Wiemhoff, James Withrow.

#### HONORARY MEMBERS

Mable Buckingham

Gene Haisley

Elva Harrison

Sunshine Jackson



# The Al G. Barnes' Big Four-Ring Wild Animal Circus

by Chang Reynolds

## Season of 1917

Meager news trickled from the Al G. Barnes' winter quarters at Venice, California, during the early months of 1917. One item did mention that Peter Taylor, well-known wild animals trainer, would be added to the Barnes' corps of trainers for the season. Taylor had arrived in the United States with Frank Bostock in the early years of the century. A report in *Billboard*, 18 June 1910, mentioned that he had been attacked twice within two weeks by a lioness named "Duchess." He was maimed terribly on the occasion of the second attack and taken to the hospital unconscious. It was predicted that he would never work in the future. His rescuers were Captain Jack Bonavita and Henry Folkendorph, trainers with the Bostock Show, which was playing at Dreamland, Coney Island. By November of the year Taylor had recovered, and, after resigning from the Bostock organization, had signed at Bartell's Hillside Park. No other mention was made in further accounts from the Barnes' press corps in 1917 concerning Peter Taylor and it was later reported that he had joined the Canadian Air Force.

Additional accounts in the press during the month of March referred to other personnel with the Barnes' Show. Sam Batty was scheduled to be in charge of the various bear groups; Vera Earle was to return with her musical pigeons and also was scheduled to work a group of dancing horses. Martha Florine continued with the big leopard act and also performed as a menage rider. The bally attraction was Wilkins in his 40 foot swing and chair balancing. Dare-Devil Ross was to do a high dive.

The roster for the 1917 season as published in *Billboard*, 24 March, listed the following staff members — Al G. Barnes, proprietor; A.L. Sands, manager; T. Stonehouse, treasurer; Dick Debbert, secretary; Alfred E. Wolff, auditor; Murray A. Pennock, general agent; William K. Peck, railroad contractor; Harry Davis, local contractor; Jack Heintz, special agent; N.F. Richardson, contracting press agent; Miss C. Miller, advance press agent; Edward W. Deck, press agent with the show; P.J. Staunton, manager Side-Show; C.I. Norris, equestrian director; Charles Cook, general super-



Al G. Barnes small male elephants Barney and Vance hitched to a cart driven by Emma Chumaud in a street parade in Bakersfield, Calif., March 19, 1917. Chet Slusser Collection.

intendent; Ben Wolf and Charles Hott, superintendent privileges; Ed Woec-kener, musical director; John Dobbert, supt. reserved seat tickets; W.A. Peterson, supt. canvas; William A. Pagett, trainmaster; Ernie Houghton, boss hostler; George Davis, supt. commissary; W.P. Saunders, supt. lights; Happy Adams, supt. properties; S.E. Brekhuis, supt. ring stock; Austin B. King, supt. stock; Ike Ellis, 24-hr agent; Sidney Rink, supt. elephants; J.O. Forbes, boss carpenter; Peter Taylor, supt. animals; Lee Roseberry, blacksmith; W.J. Erickson, mgr. adv. car No. 1; Frank D. Garrigus, mgr. adv. car No. 2; Josh Billings, checker-up; Walter A. Henry, legal adjuster; Bert E. Rickman, announcer.

The Route Book published at the

Cart being pulled in the Barnes parade in Bakersfield, Calif., Chet Slusser Collection.

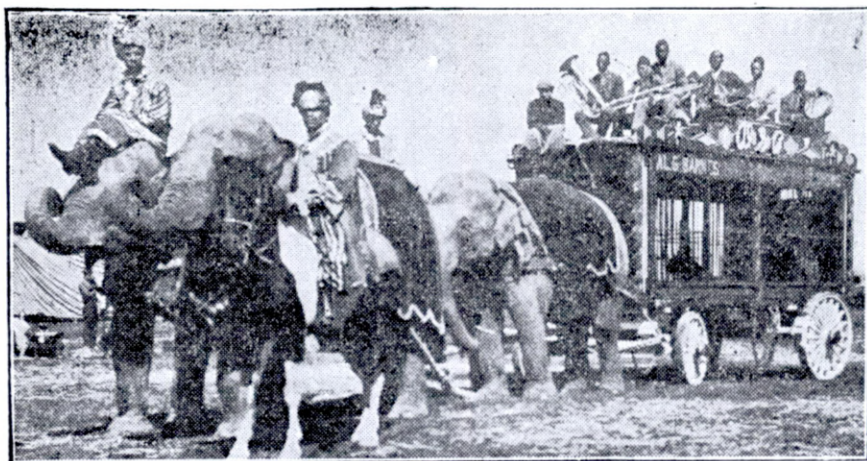


end of the 1917 season included some changes from the above list. The full name of Miss Miller, the advance press agent, was Emma C. Miller. The Equestrian Director was Bert Rickman with Austin B. King his assistant. Estelle Kahn was listed as Press Agent and Rex de Roselli as Press Agent with the show. Thomas "Skinny" Dawson was Chief Ticket Seller. C.S. Giles was in charge of the front door; Tom Heaney and Jack Lehmann were Special Agents; Elmer Lingo, Special Officer; and Andrew Stonehouse, Purchasing Agent. The San Francisco representative for the show was W.V. Hill with Harold English performing the same task in Los Angeles.

Under John Dobbert's supervision were a group seven women reserved seat ticket sellers. This group was headed by Mrs. Lelia Sands. The others were: Mrs. Ina Cook, and the Misses Phoebe Lee, Jessie Campbell, Marie Holman, Lena Heine, and Mrs. Alphonse Bourque.

The Barnes' Show opened the season with the usual spring dates — Santa Monica on 10 March, followed by two days in San Diego, one stand in





Escondido and then three days in Los Angeles. The show moved to Mojave on the 18th and then over Tehachapi Pass to Bakersfield. The usual towns of the San Joaquin Valley were played during the next two weeks and on 2 April the Barnes' Circus was in Lodi. Merced, Madera, Modesto and Redwood City preceeded the opening of the four-day San Francisco stand on 7 April.

April 3rd was marked by a Presidential announcement that proved to make a severe impact on the personnel, not only of the Barnes' Show, but also on the manpower of all outdoor exhibition – indeed on the population of the entire United States. On this date, President Wilson addressed Congress and called for a declaration of war against Germany, and the other Central Powers, in Europe. He requested in this speech a stronger Navy, a new army of 500,000 men, and full cooperation with the Allied powers. On 5 April the Senate, by a vote of 82 to 6, adopted the war declaration and the next day the House voted for war, 373 to 50. It requested a budget of \$3,000,000,000 and an army of one million men. The initial call was for volunteers to fill the ranks of the peace-time army, but the draft was soon to follow with registration to take place on 5 June.

Note: This writer has only met two men from the circus profession who served in World War I. One was Charles "Pit" Goettman who entered the army from several years service with the Sells Floto Circus menagerie department. He returned to the same show after his discharge at the end of the conflict. The other was Jack McCracken, a well-known baggage stock driver for several shows. Jack, unfortunately, was shot in the head while advancing in the wheat fields before Belleau Wood. He recovered from this serious wound and resumed his driving chores in the years following the war.

Meanwhile, the *Billboard* represen-

Sidney Rink, on horse, and his four-in-hand elephant team pulling a den of tigers. The elephants are Babe, Ruth, Jewel and Pearl. The black side show band is on the cage. This photo originally appeared in a Barnes advertisement in the April 14, 1917, *Billboard*.

tative caught the Al G. Barnes' Big Four-Ring Wild Animal Circus at Sacramento and traveled with the aggregation to Marysville and Woodland. In all three locations the show played to good business despite cold, disagreeable weather.

Barnes newspaper ad for the Baraboo, Wis., stand on August 10, 1917. This same style ad had been used in prior years. Pfening Archives.

(REPROD. OF 1917.)

# Baraboo 10

**FRIDAY, AUGUST**  
**at FAIR GROUNDS**



**AL G. BARNES**  
**BIG 4-RING WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS**  
THE SHOW THAT'S DIFFERENT



**30 - LIONS - 30**  
IN ONE ACT

**2 BIG SPECIAL TRAINS**  
100 ANIMAL TRAINERS

**506 PEOPLE ACRES OF TENTS**

World's Challenge Groups of

**1000 EDUCATED ANIMALS**  
ALL ACTORS INCLUDING  
Lions, Tigers, Bears, Leopards, Jaguars, Elephants, Camels, Zebras, Sea Lions, Zulus, Monkeys, etc.



**65 Instructive, Amusing, Amazing Thrilling Acts**

**550 World's Premium Horses and Ponies All Actors**

**40 Rib-Tickling Animal Clowns**

**SAMSON AVIATION LION**  
Causes Thrills of Amusement

Big Bill, Wrestling Grizzly, Tango Dancing Horses, Farce Comedy, Elephants, Horse-Riding Lions, Leopards and Bears, 200 Military Ponies, High-Diving and Jumping Dogs and Monkeys.

Only Real Wild Animals! Circus on Earth.

**Glittering, New, Mile-Long Street Parade at 10:30**  
Exhibitions Daily, Rain or Shine, 2nd & P. H. Doors Open, 1 and 7

The correspondent stated that the Barnes' Circus in 1917 "is miles ahead of last season's show. The entire bill has been speeded up over a hundred per cent. The opening pageant, THE CONQUEST OF NYANZA, is a show in itself, and well staged, with wardrobe and features being added daily."

This grand entry featured African costuming, wild animals (caged and at liberty), vocal choruses and exciting band music. Some of the unusual attractions were a team of brown bears driven to a chariot by Clarence Crosby; beautiful wild animals skins and furs on litters supported by camels and on the backs of other animals; a four-in-hand llama team; a baby llama escorted by a "wild man;" Vera Earle as Queen, mounted on the back of the largest elephant; tigers and lions, and bears led around the arena on chains, and other equally exciting displays.

The parade on the street during the late morning hours was well costumed and featured wagons expensively painted and several new novelties. Ed Woekener's band occupied a magnificent white and gold band wagon pulled by eight white horses. It followed four gaily dressed women trumpeters also mounted on white horses. Vera Earle drove three palomino horses in tandem. There were eleven four-horse open dens all with a man or woman trainer inside. Apparently the steam calliope rolled the streets near the front of the procession according to this report. Interspersed with the vehicles were a four-in-hand llama team; an open den of pumas pulled by eight mules; Martha Florine in an open den of leopards pulled by twelve ponies; the big African display in charge of Sidney Rink; an open den of tigers pulled by four big elephants – Bismarck Ferris's Negro band rode this one; two elephants pulled the Una Fona followed by a six-horse team drawing an open den with the clown band on top; then F.E. Miller driving a five zebra tandem hitch; Himalayan Bears, hyenas and seals – all open dens, pulled by eight-horse teams; the sacred cow led by "Mike," a Great Dane dog; five camels and the air calliope played by Grace Marvel. Many equestrians, handsomely garbed, were scattered throughout the parade. Austin B. King was the parade marshal, with Bert Dennis his assistant.

The performance for the 1917 season, as published in *Billboard*, is as follows:

Display No. 1—Grand Entry, CONQUEST OF NYANZA

Display No. 2—Ring 1—Trained ponies, Austin King; Arena—Bears, hyenas and leopards, Stephen Batty; Ring 3—Trained ponies, "Shrimp" Settler

Display No. 3—Four hind-leg ponies on the track, King and Settler

Display No. 4—Ring 1—Trained mon-



keys, F.E. Miller; Arena—Cleo Webber, dancing in the lion's den; Ring 3—Trained monkeys, Bert Dennis

Display No. 5—Clowns: Al Crooks, producing clown; A.L. Tabony, Johnnie Moore, Fred Marco, Al Brown, Charles Doherty, Andy Anderson, Curtis McHenry, George Morris, Marcus Leonard, "Dutch" Myers, "Shrimp" Settler, and George Beresford.

Display No. 6—Posing Ponies: Ring 1—Bert Dennis; Arena—Austin King; Ring 3—E.J. "Doc" Webber

Display No. 7—Monkey slide-for-life on the track

Display No. 8—The Clowns

Display No. 9—Ring 1—Riding Dogs and Monkeys, Bert Dennis; Arena—Lions, Herman Weidon; Ring 2—Sidney Rink and elephants

Display No. 10—Ring 1—Trained Llamas, Eddie Butler; Arena—The Famous Riding Four (monkey, dog, leopard and bear riding ponies), Margaret Ricardo

Display No. 11—Clowns

Display No. 12—Ring 1—Trained Dogs, F.E. Miller; Arena—Leopards, Martha Florine; Ring 3—Trained Dogs, Bert Dennis

Display No. 13—High-diving dog and monkey, Bert Dennis

Display No. 14—Ring 1—Group of performing pachyderms and acrobatic girls, Sidney Rink; Arena—Riding hybrid, Clarence Crosby; Ring 3—Clown, pony and mule, Andy Anderson

Display No. 15—Concert Announcement with parade of performers, Pete Staunton

Display No. 16—Ring 1—Monkey "principal act," Bert Dennis; Arena—Four performing zebras, Austin King; Ring 3—Riding dog and monkey, "Shrimp" Settler

Display No. 17—Revolving tables with clowns, dogs, and ponies; all rings

Display No. 18—Football elephant on the track

Display No. 19—Arena—Lion riding an elephant, Herman Weidon and Sidney Rink

Display No. 20—Menage and high school horses: Mabel Stark, Louis Roth, Lucille King, Austin B. King, Martha Florine, Margaret Ricardo, Herman Weidon, "Shrimp" Settler, Cleo Webber, Bert Dennis, E.J. "Doc" Webber, Clarence Crosby, Stephen Beatty, Vera Earle and Captain Stonewall

Display No. 21—Vera Earle, singing on horseback with trained pigeons

Display No. 22—Performing bears, Stephen Beatty

Display No. 23—Rings 1 and 2—Trained pony and elephant in each

Display No. 24—Clowns

Display No. 25—Ring 1—Two camels and a pony, Eddie Butler; Arena—Five Bengal tigers, Mabel Stark; Ring 3—Three trained camels, Sidney Rink



Two small elephants are shown pulling a cage in the Baraboo parade in 1917. Pfening Archives.

Display No. 26—Ring 1—Four Liberty ponies, "Shrimp" Settler; Arena—Captain Stonewall's Trained Seals; Ring 3—Three Liberty ponies, Austin King; Track—Clown goat

Display No. 27—Arena—Riding Seals, Captain Stonewall

Display No. 28—Ring 1—Riding dogs, Bert Dennis; Ring 3—Clowns

Display No. 29—Ring 1—Riding dogs, Bert Dennis; Arena—Eight Pumas, Herman Weidon; Ring 3—Trained Goats, Andy Anderson

Display No. 30—Clowns in all rings; Track—Rope-walking sun bear, Stephen Beatty

Display No. 31—Ring 1—Aerial po-

Part of the parade in Baraboo, Wis., August 10, 1917. Right to left are part of a cage of tigers, and a team consisting of a sacred cow and four llamas. Unusual hitches such as this were prime features of the Barnes' parades of that period. Joe Bradbury Collection.



ny, Cleo Webber; Arena—"Sampson," the aerial lion with fireworks display, Mabel Stark; Ring 3—Aerial pony

Display No. 32—Trained dogs, all rings

Display No. 33—Ring 1—Group of elephants, Sidney Rink; Arena—Wrestling bear, Clarence Crosby; Ring 3—Elephants, Eddie Butler

Display No. 34—"Caruso" and "Balboa," singing mules with clowns

Display No. 35—Bucking mules, featuring Andy Anderson and "Dynamite," plus all clowns in all rings

Display No. 36—Ring 1—Riding dogs, Bert Dennis; Arena—Twelve male lions, Louis Roth; Ring 3—Trick pony, Cleo Webber

This program, with an extensive number of displays, seems to be burdensome with repetition, but on the whole was interesting and varied. Herman Weidon, one of the principal trainers, left the show soon after the San Francisco stand. Apparently he was not replaced and the other capable trainers were able to fill his place. Perhaps, the program was shortened.

There were rumors at this time that





Another 1917 view of the tiger den and four elephant team. Sidney Rink, elephant trainer, is pictured on the right with his back to camera. Chet Slusser Collection.

the Barnes' Show would use Fresno, California, as winter quarters in place of the Venice location at the close of the tour. It seems that there were continuing difficulties with the Venice operators and these rumors of a change of location continually cropped up on the show and in the press in these years.

A rather curious circumstance took place regarding Cole Bros. World Toured Shows in 1917. It, as well as Cooper Bros. Circus, a two-car show, wintered at the fairgrounds in Riverside, California, from December 1916 to March 1917. The Cole Show opened in Riverside on 7 March and then played Santa Ana. It then went south along the coast and crossed into the Imperial Valley via the San Diego and Arizona Railroad. A young woman from Riverside departed that city with the show – her professional name became Babe Gardner – wife of the famous elephant trainer, Cheerful Gardner.

The Cole Bros. World Toured Shows played Pasadena on 16 March 1917, while the A. G. Barnes' Circus was in its initial day on the lot in Los Angeles. The Cole Show, owned by J. Augustus Jones, added many columns of print to the *Pasadena Star-News* during the weeks preceeding the show date. Among the items presented to the public were: "big-three-ringed trained wild animal show – 39th annual tour – two steel trains – hundreds of wild animals – Cheerful Gardner and his troupe of three elephants – Louis Roth has done wonders in his training of lions – fearless little Mabel Stark in the steel arena with leopards, panthers and tigers – Mizunos Troupe of Japanese acrobats – Wizardi Troupe of wire walkers – clowns headed by Charley Post."

Fabulous advertising indeed! Circus patrons could easily have seen Roth and Stark on the Barnes' Circus which had been making stands within a few miles of the Jones' organization all spring. The route followed by J. Aug-

ustus took his show north along the coast away from Barnes in the San Joaquin Valley but the two outfits pulled near to each other again in the central part of the state – within three days of each other at Santa Cruz and one day apart at San Jose, for example. This routing resulted in much visiting between personnel of the two organizations.

The Barnes' Circus made a two-day stand in Oakland following the conclusion of its four days in San Francisco. It then moved on to Santa Rosa, Ukiah and Eureka. At this last location, on 16 April, the lot was under water; it was raining and cold; the cookhouse was a half-mile from the big top – altogether a most disagreeable stand. A baby camel was born here and The Rozells, lady clowns, joined the show.

The circus continued north in California with stands marred by "unusual" weather and reached Klamath Falls, Oregon, on 30 April to play a stand marked by a long haul, a bad lot, snow and heavy rain. Returning to California in order to cross the mountains to Oregon's Willamette Valley, the show made a 113-mile jump to Montague. The circus train pulled in to town late and unloaded the dripping canvas and rain-soaked paraphernalia. Clarence Crosby was thrown from his horse in the parade and slightly injured. Louis Roth had added several new tricks to his big act consisting of twenty-four lions and was also breaking a new mixed cat group for Mabel Stark.

A report from Myrtle Point, Oregon, on 7 May indicated that the show had arrived on time and played on a lot by the school house. The attendance at night was only fair, but the afternoon house was very good. At Marshfield, the next day, the show was favored by two good houses on a very poor lot.

There was a long haul to Eugene for the next stand and the circus gave a night show only to a packed tent. Albany, the day following, provided two fine houses on a good lot and in good weather. Salem, on 11 May, also gave two good houses, but it rained during the unloading and during the parade and there were showers at night. McMinnville, the Saturday date, was featured by a very good lot and fine weather – and business was great.

Additional notes from the show at this time indicated that Austin King had returned after a severe illness. The band, Grace Marvel with the air calliope, Al Crooks and all the clowns brought cheer to the inmates of the State Hospital during the week.

After McMinnville, the Barnes' Show made a two-day stand in Portland, and then began a nineteen-day series of dates in Washington; interrupted by one day in Vancouver, British Columbia, on the 26th of May. Seattle was a two-day stand on the 28th and 29th. This series of Washington dates ended on 8 June when the show moved to Couer d'Alene, Idaho. It alternated Idaho and eastern Washington stands for the next week.

From Marshfield, Washington, on the 1st of June a report from the circus stated that a severe wind storm prevented the erection of the big top. The powerful winds blew down everything portable, but the show was still able to give two performances despite this handicap. A new big top and side wall arrived when the show reached Spokane on the 9th on the month, and entirely new canvas was due to arrive in the near future. Sidney Rink had developed a new elephant act called "War Brides" which was worked by Grace Marvel. Mabel Stark was presenting ten tigers in her act at this time. A new cook house came on the show at Kennewick, and Abe Goldstein, clown, joined the show during the early Washington tour. He had previously worked as one of Hollywood's Keystone Cops.

The A. G. Barnes' Circus finally completed its tour of the State of Washington with a week of stands, June 18–23, and then made eastern Oregon dates at Pendleton, La Grande, and Baker. Six towns in Idaho preceeded its entry into Montana where thirteen dates occupied the circus activities until July 18. A tour of North Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin followed. As usual there were very few notes from the circus during the summer touring season. A brief comment on 30 June reported that a shipment of six kangaroos, twelve cockatoos, ten monkeys, and twenty other tropical birds had arrived on the show. In addition, this report stated that A. G. had placed orders for two baby elephants and other stock which would arrive in the fall.



The first wreck of the season occurred just outside of St. Paul, Minnesota, when one of the stock cars turned over. According to this report, Sidney Rink and the elephants righted it and all the show's stock was placed in three system stock cars. The show played at Baraboo on 10 August and Barnes purchased several new wagons from Moeller Bros. Whether these wagons were placed on the show at this time or simply ordered, was not made clear in the article.

After the Monroe, Wisconsin date on 17 August, the Barnes' Circus played Freeport, Illinois, before moving into Iowa for seven dates which were concluded by the 25th of the month. Trenton and St. Joseph, Missouri followed and on the 29th the show entered Kansas. Five stands were played in this state and the show went on to Oklahoma on the fourth of September. By the middle of September news from the Barnes' Circus again appeared in the *Billboard*.

This report stated that "business continues big for the Al G. Barnes' Circus." During the parade at Waurika, Oklahoma, Martha Florine was severely injured when she was attacked by her leopards. Mabel Stark, in the cage following that in which Florine rode, was also attacked by the lions accompanying her. After that cat insurrection was subdued, Florine went to the hospital and Mabel Stark continued with the show. Other, less tragic news, indicated that Alto Stout was considered to have one of the best ladder acts in the business - it was the free act on the show at this time. Bert Leo and his trained goose, "Mike," were attracting much attention during the performance. A baboon escaped and it took two days for "Shrimp" Settler to catch it. W.V. Hill of the Southern Pacific was a visitor for a few days. A baby zebra was born at Dallas, Texas, on the 11th and was appropriately named "Dallas." Al G. and A.L. Sands visited both the Ringling Bros. Circus and the Jess Willard-Buffalo Bill Show, both of which were in the vicinity.

The Barnes' Circus played only four stands in Oklahoma - Waurika was the final one - and then entered Texas for a long series of dates that would continue until 12 October. During this string of thirty towns the show played Ft. Worth, Dallas, Houston, Galveston, and Amarillo. The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Show entered Texas, at El Paso, on 20 September. It was moving east from its Pacific Coast tour. It made the Dallas and Ft. Worth stands on September 24 and 25, while the Barnes' organization had those two towns on the 10th and 11th. In this big state the two circuses were never really close to each other; the Barnes' Show generally a week and a half to two weeks ahead of the Ring-



A camel and baby are shown in the Baraboo parade. A large billboard of paper is posted on the building in background. Pfening Archives.

ling outfit. The Barnes' Circus had played closer to the Greatest Show on Earth in Wisconsin, when, for example, it played the Baraboo area on 10 August while Barnum & Bailey was in Madison by the 14th.

The Jess Willard - Buffalo Bill Wild West played Dallas on 22 September and Ft. Worth on the 24th right under the nose of the Ringling Big One. The cowboy outfit was in Houston by the 29th. So while Barnes and A.L. Sands scurried over the rolling plains to visit the wild west outfit, there was no serious competition for fan patronage.

The next *Billboard* report came from Texas in mid-October. It stated that the town of Ennis, on the first of the month, had furnished a capacity crowd in the afternoon and a good night house. In Decatur, the next day, there was a good afternoon attendance and capacity at night. Henrietta, on the third, had a big night house, but was only fair in the afternoon. Wichita Falls came next with a very good lot and two fine houses. Vernon only provided fair attendance at both shows, but Quanah gave great business. The article continued, "In spite of the lack of rain in this territory and the fact that the crops are gone, the Barnes' Shows have never played to better business."

Mabel Stark and Louis Roth had combined to present a new riding lion act for the first time at Wichita Falls. This famous lady was also followed all over the lot each day by two baby tigers. She kept them in her car at night in a clothes basket. This writer does not know the date when Miss Stark first started to wrestle a full-grown tiger. The program at the beginning of the year does not indicate that she

did this act, but she certainly was creating a great deal of attention with the wrestling tiger act in Texas in the fall.

Pete Staunton had added some new features to the annex. The latest were the Patagonian Twins and Big Sambo, the tall man. Martha Florine rejoined the show in Texas but was unable to work due to the injuries suffered in Waurika.

The Barnes' Circus left the state of Texas at Hereford on 12 October and traveled into New Mexico for four stands at Portales, Vaughn, Albuquerque and Gallup. This unusual routing took the circus into Arizona for eleven stands and then it returned to New Mexico for one date before playing El Paso, Texas on 29 October. Six additional towns were played in New Mexico following the El Paso date and the show then moved to Arizona again for five towns, concluding at Yuma on the 5th of November.

*Billboard*, in its 27 October issue featured a good portrait of Al G. Barnes on its front cover. An item in the 8 November issue provided some news from the show which covered some of the fall dates. The circus had been billed to give two performances on 11 October at Amarillo, Texas, but on the day preceeding the stand, Mr. Barnes was notified at Clarendon that the circus would not be permitted to show or parade in Amarillo because of the fair being held at that town. Mr. A.L. Sands took the evening train to Amarillo where he was informed that if the Barnes' Show attempted to exhibit or parade the license would be revoked, and, if that didn't stop the circus, the water supply would be shut off. Sands refused to be turned away and, with the press and public clamoring for the parade and the performance, the arguments resulted in the presentation of the parade and two turnaway houses



at the afternoon and evening performances.

At Childress, Texas, on the 8th, the show had two good houses on a fair lot with a short haul from the yards. At Memphis, the next day, the circus was faced with a very long haul to a bad lot, but business was great. Clarendon provided a good lot and the afternoon performance had a good attendance, but the night show proved to be only fair. Hereford, the stand after Amarillo, furnished a railroad lot with two fair houses. Portales, New Mexico, had another railroad lot and two good houses.

Kenneth Waite, a clown who joined the show in September, provided new stunts for clown alley. The new wild animal hunt and races were added as closing numbers to the performance, and proved to be a much more satisfactory finale. Sidney Rink had recovered from an illness and was able to work the elephants. Vera Earle gave an open air concert for the benefit of the Red Cross.

At Albuquerque, the 15 October date, also furnished a railroad lot with excellent attendance at both performances. Gallup also had a lot by the railroad yards and the afternoon performance was packed, mostly by Indians who had come to town the day before and camped near the lot. The circus encountered a wind and dust storm at Winslow and the weather was very cold. There was a fair afternoon attendance and a big house at night. The Barnes' Show hauled a mile to the lot at Flagstaff, but still recorded good crowds at both shows. Williams was the same as far as attendance was concerned and at Prescott only one performance was given to a capacity house.

At Albuquerque the personnel of the Barnes' Circus gathered at the grave of Maude Rollins who had been a member of the circus at the time of her death. Many members of the show purchased Liberty Bonds with Al G.

being the chief contributor when he purchased \$10,000 worth. It was reported at this time that Vera Earle would give a series of concerts in churches for the benefit of the Red Cross. A second baby llama was born in the show's menagerie. Several musicians from the Gollmar Circus joined Ed Woekener's band in October. The additional members increased the total number to twenty-five men.

From Yuma, the Barnes' Show returned to California for fourteen stands which terminated the season. It played two towns in the Imperial Valley; moved to San Bernardino; played Long Beach on the 15th of November; and then was routed along the coast as far north as Paso Robles. Its final stand was a return visit to Long Beach on the 24th of November. It then made the short run to its winter quarters in Venice.

For the past three years Long Beach had been the closing stand, and either rain or the late arrival of the circus train had precluded the parade or putting up the menagerie top. This year proved to be different and there was a parade, a menagerie tent, and everything else that marked a regular show date for the circus. An almost turn-away crowd gathered at the front door before it was opened and the patrons were delighted with the performance.

News of personnel in the late fall included the information that Grace Marvel worked the "War Elephant act" by herself; that Martha Florine was able to walk again and would soon begin work with the leopards in winter quarters; that Louis Roth was planning a larger male lion act and would probably have twelve or fourteen of the big cats in the arena upon the opening of the 1918 season. (Advertising during the 1917 tour had

**A group of cages lined up for a 1917 parade. The elephant team is in the center. Gordon Potter Collection in Pfening Archives.**



stated that he worked "twenty-four" of the animals.)

At Venice, the Barnes' train was parked in various locations around the entrance to the city. According to the Havirland files the Barnes' Show traveled on thirty cars in 1917. There were two in advance, seven stocks, fourteen flats and seven coaches. Louis Roth and Mabel Stark were in charge of the big feline house in the "back country" of the quarters while the camels, elephants and hoofed animals were situated in quarters near The Race Through the Clouds at the pier. The bears, in charge of John Beatty, occupied a building near the cat quarters. The entire wintering area was supervised by Charles Cook and Bert Rickman.

Many of the performers and other members of the Barnes' Circus were staying at the St. Marks Hotel. Among those in residence there were Margaret Ricardo, Martha Florine, Clarence Crosby, Kinny Dawson, Ed Woekener, Vera Earle and several others.

Notes from the 1917 route book: Early in the season performers from Pete Staunton's Side Show had provided a vaudeville type Concert after the big show ended. Later, the circus switched to a Wild West Concert with Gene Hall as head cowboy, supported by four cowboys and three cowgirls.

The Side Show was managed by P.J. Staunton with Al Lettellier as Inside Lecturer. Bismark Ferris was the bandleader with fourteen musicians. The attractions were: Florence Dobbert, Australain Cockatoos; Princess Omwah, Den of Snakes; Prince Omwah, Boomerang Thrower; Al Lettellier, Magician and Illusionist; Mlle. Lilita, Living Half-Lady (illusion); Spidora, Spider Girl (illusion); Eco and Ico, Patagonian Twins; Human Fish, Prof. Carr; "Junior," the tiniest living pony.

The Vaudeville Troupe included Princess Zubelda, Princess Nemah, Josephine Fuente, dancers; Mona le Layne, classic poses; and Avedas Vartareassian and John Asartona, musicians.

Andy Carbone managed the second side show with his wife as assistant. Frank de Forrest was the announcer and the feature was the midget, Prince Napoleon.

The performers, as listed in the route book were: Capt. Albert Stonewall (Stonehouse), Bert Dennis, Clarence Crosby, Ed "Doc" Webber, Sidney Rink, Price O'Mar, Bob McNeal, Kenneth Waite, Dutch Marco, Geo. Morris, Willie Brooks, "Shorty" Brown, Harry Patterson, Charles Ballard, Vera Earle, Lucille King, Grace Marvel, Elizabeth McCarthy, Margaret Musgrove, Elsie McCray, Louis Roth, Stephen Beatty, George "Shrimp" Settler, Joe Miller, Eddie Butler, Curtice McHenry, Will Hughes, O.E. Dops, Bert Leo, Leo



Phillips, "Rube" Dalroy, Bert Williams, Frank Darr, Paul Kafka, Martha Florine, Mabel Stark, Margaret Ricardo, Cleo Webber, Alta Stout, Pearl Hamilton, Dot Whitney, Lillian Cushing and Josephine Miller.

The Canvas Department was headed by G.F. Millard with Sailor Jack Ulmer and Frank Harris as assistants. There were thirty some men in the crew. R.A. Carhart was boss canvasman for the Side Show with a crew of seven men.

The Baggage Stock Department was directed by G.W. Dawson with assistants John Logan and M. Shea. F. Miller was the Veterinary. There were three 8-horse drivers, four 6-horse drivers, and eleven 4-horse drivers.

Austin King was supervisor of the ring stock and ponies. J. Stewart was his assistant with the ring stock and E. Mountain, assistant with the ponies. There were one 10-pony driver, two 8-pony drivers, and one 6-mule driver.

Frank Warner and Joseph Turner assisted Superintendent Louis Roth in the Cat Animal Department. There were three men working with the lions; four men in charge of tigers; three men with the leopards; and two men took care of the pumas.

Stephen Batty was Superintendent of the bears and hyenas. The black, brown and grizzly bears were attended by three men while two others handled the polar bears.

The elephants, camels, zebras and llamas were supervised by Sidney Rink with Will Hughes, assistant. Three men were in charge of the six elephants with one each to serve the other stock in this department.

"Shrimp" Settler was in charge of the kangaroos, dogs, goats and pigs. He had six helpers.

Other Superintendents were: William Campbell (electrical); Bob Hampton (props); Al Goethke (trainmaster); "Doc" Webber and Mrs. Pearl Rink (wardrobe); Charles Hott (privileges); H.X. Clark (candy stands); George Davis (commissary); W.J. Erickson (Manager of Advance Car No. 1 with eighteen men) and F.D. Garrigus (Manager of Advance Car No. 2 with eight men).

In 1917 the Al G. Barnes Circus gave 246 afternoon and 239 night performances. Total mileage for the season was 16,151 miles. The eight performances missed were: Mojave, California—night show because of long run; Montague, California—night show on account of long run; Cottage Grove, Oregon—night show account of heavy rain; Mapleton, Oregon—no show account of heavy rain; Eugene, Oregon—afternoon show account of late arrival; Wabasha, Minnesota—both shows account of rain; Mineral Point, Wisconsin—afternoon show account of late arrival; Yuma, Arizona—afternoon show account of late arrival.

## Season of 1918

The second year of the war with the Central Powers opened with all the problems for circus management endured during the first year intensified almost beyond belief. When the autumn months arrived, with the most welcome armistice, the tented entertainment world had already shut down because of an epidemic of influenza that was more damaging than the loss of manpower to the war effort.

In early October quarantine regulations made necessary by the epidemic of Spanish influenza brought the circus season of 1918 to practically a close. Nearly all of the circuses still on the road were playing in the southern states and were caught by the restrictions regarding amusements that were being enforced.

Both the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circuses closed on Tuesday, 8 October, and were immediately shipped to winter quarters at Bridgeport, Connecticut. The Ringling Bros. Circus had encountered difficulties for several days previous to the closing. Savannah, Jacksonville and other towns on the route had been closed to amusements. This forced the management to ship the show to quarters from Waycross, Georgia, rather than risk losing additional stands. The Barnum & Bailey show did not lose any dates, but, foreseeing the trouble ahead, closed at Houston, Texas on the same date as the Ringling show.

The John Robinson Ten Big Shows were shut out of Norfolk, Virginia, and moved to Raleigh, N.C., several days ahead of their billing in the hope of finding some open territory. Failure to locate any dates convinced Mugivan and Bowers that it was time to close and the show was shipped to Peru, Indiana, winter quarters.

The John H. Sparks Show was

**This small cage containing a lion was pulled by a pony hitch in the 1917 Barnes parade. Gordon Potter Collection in Pfening Archives.**

caught in Laurinsburg, N.C., with all towns in the region quarantined. Manager Charles Sparks sent the train to Salisbury, N.C., to the quarters used by the show during the past few winters.

Yankee Robinson Circus closed at Stuttgart, Arkansas, on 9 October, and moved to quarters at Granger, Iowa. Manager Andrew Downie closed the Walter L. Main Circus a week ahead of schedule and shipped it to its quarters at Havre de Grace, Maryland.

Cole Bros Circus closed at Corinth, Miss., and the Sun Bros. Circus only operated during the first week of October and then provided the added attraction at the Southeastern Fair at Atlanta, Georgia. (Perhaps one of the historians from Atlanta could provide us with the reason the fair could remain open when all other types of amusements were forced to close.)

Every town in the State of Texas was closed by a quarantine which caught the Gentry Bros. Shows, Al G. Barnes' Circus and the Christy Hippodrome Shows while they were touring the state.

The details of the Barnes' closing are as follows: the train pulled into Dallas, Texas, on schedule, 13 October, prepared to exhibit on Monday, the 14th, but found that Dallas, like all other cities in the state was closed by the influenza quarantine. Al G. called in his advance agents and connected the advertising cars to a Texas-Pacific locomotive, added a regular Pullman for his own comfort, and high-tailed it to Venice, California. The rest of the show, in charge of Manager Al Sands, made a six-day trip via El Paso and arrived in quarters on Sunday, 20 October.

The city officials of Venice, realizing that the circus had been traveling through territory in which influenza was rampant, ordered the health officers to meet the train in Los Angeles and there it was thoroughly inspected. Assured that there were no influenza cases on board, the train was allowed to move on to Venice. Some members







Al G. Barnes light plant department wagons on the lot in Los Angeles, Calif., March 23, 1918. Puck photo in Joe Bradbury Collection.

of the show, ill with the influenza, were left behind when the train moved out of Dallas. These included among others, Murray Pennock, General Agent; W.J. Erickson, manager of Advance Car No. 1; and Mrs. Bobby Fountain. Other show personnel fell victim to the disease in Venice. The population of that town was struck very lightly by the epidemic. However, all amusements were closed by the health authorities until the middle of November. After that date, only theatres were still closed to the public.

With all of the above to stalk the unsuspecting show folks, it is time to turn back to the opening months of the year when all was a pleasant activity in preparation for the coming season. The opening weeks, as usual, found the Barnes' press corps furnishing *Billboard* with a fair amount of information, very little reporting during the summer, and a quantity equal to that of the spring in the fall months.

From Venice, on 15 February, came the word that James Babcock had been installed as superintendent and that his workers were turning out elaborately decorated dens and parade wagons. Bill Ellis was the chief decorator. It was predicted that the Al G. Barnes' Circus would be one of the best decorated and flashiest shows ever seen on the Pacific Coast. One of Babcock's specialties, under the constant supervision of George Davis, was a new kitchen wagon. However, flashy paint could not hide the fact that the Barnes' Show was still using equipment designed and built during the early years of its existence. It wasn't until 1919 that the show would correct this with the purchase of some venerable tableaux.

In the menagerie department Louis Roth and Mabel Stark worked their charges each day to improve the presentation of these large acts. The

number of Stark's tigers was to be doubled (according to this report) and the lions, worked by Roth, was nearly twice that of 1917. Margaret Ricardo was preparing new puma and lioness acts, while Austin B. King was framing new stunts for the ringstock and high-school horses.

Other notes included the announcement of the marriage of Cleo Frazee and "Doc" Webber, the veterinarian. (Readers will note that this lady had worked acts under the name of Cleo Webber in previous years.) William Peck, traffic manager, had returned to quarters; Murray Pennock was scheduled to be the general agent; Al Butler, formerly of Sells Floto Circus, would join the Al G. Barnes' advance crew. John Ince, film producer, had recently used the show equipment, animals and people in an elaborate circus scenario – name unknown to this writer.

According to the Havirland files the 1918 Barnes' Circus traveled on 30 cars as it had the year previously. However, the stock cars were cut back to six and the coaches increased by one to total eight. Don Francis calls attention to the fact (letter 13 August 1981) that Barnes must have done some real "squeezing" to maintain a train of 30 cars and still purchase all the animals and wagons that the show reported adding during his tours of the mid-west.

The author's route sheet for the Al G. Barnes' Circus of 1918 indicates that the show opened in Santa Monica on 15 March and then moved to San Diego for a four-day stand. This seems excessive, and the length of the stay in San Diego being limited to only two days is verified by *Billboard*, 6 April, which states: "The Al G. Barnes' Circus appeared in San Diego, Cal., March 18 and 19, showing to big crowds on the first day, but having only a handful on Tuesday, on account of very heavy rains." The report continues by referring to F.W. Blasser ("Frank, the Yankee Whittler" and his wife, May, the snake charmer) as well-known members of the Side Show. The Wild



A corner statue cage with leopards is shown on a Barnes lot in 1917. Gordon Potter Collection in Pfening Archives.

West aftershow featured Colonel Frederick Cummings, who with his horse, "Black Beauty," had been a popular attraction at the San Diego Exposition in 1916.

The Barnes' Show moved from San Diego to Anaheim and then to Los Angeles for a three-day stand. It followed its usual route north; first to Lancaster on the desert, and then over Tehachapi Pass to Bakersfield. The last week in March was spent visiting towns in the San Joaquin Valley. Twenty towns were one-day stands before the show arrived in San Francisco for a four-day engagement.

*Billboard*, 20 April, featured nearly a half-page of photos depicting Mabel Stark wrestling with a full-grown Royal Bengal tiger. It was stated that she was "the only animal trainer in the world" to accomplish this feat. The next week's issue contained a short article from the circus which reported: "The big feature is the opening pageant, depicting the bringing of animals from the jungles, The Conquest of Nyanza. The closing feature is a 'Royal Hunt,' when elephants, camels, llamas, zebras and kangaroos are turned on to the hippodrome track and given chase by Australian bushmen and jungle natives. The big acts are Mabel Stark in a wrestling match with a Bengal tiger; Thekla, a maiden of mystery from India, in charge of Barnes' challenge group of lions; Grace Marvel with her War Elephants; Clarence Crosby, with a big polar bear act; Martha Florine, with leopards; Marguerite Ricardo and her fighting pumas; Stephen Batty with bears; Venus Fashion, with posing and dancing horses; Alfred Powell, in his unimitable clown features, and corps of assistants. Bert Rickman is again the announcer. Bob Adare is on the front gate. Bobby Fountain has the kid show."

It will be quickly noted from reading the above that Louis Roth had been



replaced by the "Mystery lady," Thekla, in charge of the big male lion act. What happened to Louis after all these seasons with the Barnes' Show? Details are lacking, but *Billboard*, 10 May indicates that he was working with the Great Wortham Shows, a carnival featuring wild animal acts. Otherwise, the program for 1918 was very similar to that of the previous season. (One note concerning Stephen Beatty or Batty—the author has seen the name spelled both way in the *Billboard*.)

From San Francisco the usually detailed review was written and published in the *Billboard*, 4 May. The author of the article states that: "the Al G. Barnes' Wild Animal Circus opened here to a turnaway, and followed with several well-filled performances, three of which were capacity and one a turnaway."

The parade consisted of the usual open dens with trainers riding in each display. There were a sprinkling of tableau wagons and many equestrians. The parade was headed by Cleo Webber, who carried a service flag with ninety-eight stars representing all the men from the show who had entered the United States service up to the time of the last draft. (This number of draftees and volunteers will give the reader some idea of the depletion in the ranks of circus personnel during World War I.)

The performance was the usual wild animal exhibition as given by Al G. Barnes with some new numbers added. Bert Rickman was equestrian director and Bob Thornton was his assistant. The pageant, first created for the 1917 season and repeated again in 1918 with more elaborate costuming, was *The Conquest of Nyanza*. It opened with Ed Woeckener's twenty-piece band on the hippodrome track preceeding Vera Earle, as queen, on the back of an elephant. Vera Earle sang from her high perch and the entire company joined in the chorus. (After much searching this author has never been able to locate the titles of any of the songs sung by Miss Earle during the Barnes' pageants.)

Display No. 1—*The Conquest of Nyanza*

Display No. 2—Ring 1—Pony drill, Robert Thornton; Arena—Polar bears, Stephen Beatty; Ring 2—Pony drill, George "Shrimp" Settler

Display No. 3—Hippodrome Track—"Denver," "Buster," and "Jupiter," champion hind-leg ponies

Display No. 4—Clowns—Al Crooks, producing clown, with Fred Marco, Bill Tait, Wirth Byron, Bert Leo, R.G. Fuller, Albert Powell, Harry Kelly, Marc Requa, Bill Wirth, Frank Flynn, Mitchell Lasky, Jim Brown, and Hank White.

Display No. 5—Ring 1—Aerial mon-

key, Jack Stewart; Arena—"The dainty dancer in the lion's den," Cleo Webber; Ring 2—Aerial monkey, George "Shrimp" Settler

Display No. 6—Posing horses: Ring 1—Clarence Crosby; Arena—Austin B. King; Ring 2—Edwin "Doc" Webber

Display No. 7—Clowns

Display No. 8—Ring 1—Performing llamas; Arena—Nubian Lions, Stephen Beatty, principal trainer; Ring 2—Performing Elephants, Sidney Rink

Display No. 9—Ring 1—Riding monkey and dog, George Settler; Arena—The Riding Four (leopard, dog, bear, and monkey) on ponies, Margaret Ricardo; Ring 2—Performing dogs, Robert Thornton

Display No. 10—Clowns

Display No. 11—Musical Elephants, hippodrome track, Sidney Rink

Display No. 12—Ring 1—Performing dogs, Clarence Crosby; Arena—Martha Florine and her leopard group; Ring 2—Performing dogs, Robert Thornton

Display No. 13—High diving dogs and monkeys on the Hippodrome Track, Robert Thornton

Display No. 14—Ring 1—Performing elephants and athletic girls, Sidney Rink; Arena—Riding hybrid, Vera Robson; Ring 2—"Nellie," monkey bare-back rider, George Settler

Display No. 15—Ring 1—Trained pigs, Robert Thornton; Arena—Performing seals and sea lions, Captain Stonewall; Ring 2—Performing pigs, Dutch Marco

Display No. 16—Horses, dogs and clowns on revolving tables

Display No. 17—Football elephants

Display No. 18—"Nero," the lion that rides an elephant

Display No. 19—High school horses, both rings and hippodrome track. Riders: Clarence Crosby, Vera Earle, Austin B. King, Hazel Hoxie, "Doc" Webber, Cleo Webber, Mabel Stark, Margaret Ricardo, Rollie Rollins, Vera Robson, Joe Miller, Ova Ashworth,

**Al G. Barnes street parade about 1918. In the foreground are the two small male elephants, Barney and Vance, hitched to a cart which is followed by a line of four elephants. Chet Slusser Collection.**



Robert Thornton, George Settler, Martha Florine, and Laverne Glenn

Display No. 20—Mabel Stark, on a gaited musical stallion on the Hippodrome Track

Display No. 21—Dancing and tango horses, including the wonderful five-gaited solo by "King George," ridden by Austin B. King

Display No. 22—Vera Earle, prima donna, and trained pigeons, singing popular songs

Display No. 23—Concert Announcement, Bobbie Fountain

Display No. 24—Ring 1—Trained pony and elephant, Ova Ashworth; Arena—Black and brown bears, Clarence Crosby; Ring 2—Pony and elephant, Grace Marvel

Display No. 25—Hippodrome Track: Huge elephants carrying tiny Shetland ponies

Display No. 26—Rings 1 and 2: Aerial ponies, Laverne Glenn and Joe Ferrando

Display No. 27—Arena: Boxing kangaroos and clowns

Display No. 28—Bob Thornton's famous rube parade, including an eight-pig team.

Display No. 29—Sam Ferguson and his trained geese

Display No. 30—All rings; kicking and bucking mules with the clowns

Display No. 31—Ring 1—Group of performing camels, Alex Hughes; Arena—Big tiger group, Mabel Stark; Ring 2—Camel group, Jimmie Walsh

Display No. 32—Mabel Stark wrestles with "Rajah," a full-grown Bengal tiger for two minutes.

Display No. 33—Clowns

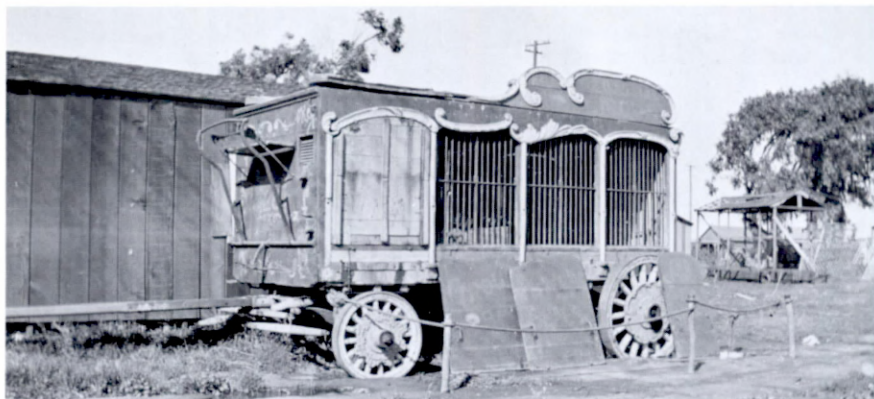
Display No. 34—Rings 1 and 2—Four-horse Liberty acts. Palomino Group, Vera Robson; Black Arabs, Cleo Webber; Arena—Performing Zebras, Austin B. King

Display No. 35—War and Red Cross elephant group, presenting an elaborate battle and rescue drama, Grace Marvel

Display No. 36—Ring 1—Riding dogs, Jack Stewart; Arena—Group of eight pumas, Margaret Ricardo; Ring 2—Performing goats, Robert Thornton

Display No. 37—Clown burlesque





Display No. 38—Rings 1 and 2 and arena: Wrestling bears, Clarence Crosby, Jean Hall and Jimmie Walsh  
Display No. 39—Clowns

Display No. 40—Ring 1—Performing elephants, Sidney Rink; Arena—Three male riding lions, Ova Ashworth and Stephen Beatty; Ring 2—Performing elephants, Prince Omar

Display No. 41—Riding and bucking mules, both rings.

Display No. 42—Ring 1—Group of performing dogs, Joe Miller; Arena—Group of eight male African lions, Vera Robson, billed as "Venice Fashion"; Ring 2—Baby stallion act, Cleo Webber

Display No. 43—Hippodrome Track: Reproduction of an African Hunt.

Display No. 44—"Samson," the original aerial lion, working with fireworks display, Mabel Stark

Display No. 45—The Star-Spangled Banner

This was an extremely long program well padded with dog acts. The reader will note the work of Vera Robson, variously billed as "Venus Fashion" or "Venice Fashion," depending upon which issue of *Billboard* is consulted. Also note the work of Ova Ashworth, later to become Mrs. Robert Thornton.

Bob Thornton was an exceptional trainer and during the interview with him in May 1964 he referred to sever-

A large cage is shown in the Barnes winter quarters in Venice, Calif., in 1918. Pfening Archives.

al of his trained pig acts. Of his first adventure with the porkers he related this: "Did you know Big Otto? I went to work for Big Otto in Chicago. He was in Riverview Park, Chicago. I went over there and talked to him and he put me to work. He wanted a pig act - so I went and got the pigs. The first week I went up to get my salary and he said, 'You know we have a holdback.' So I said, 'O.K. but I'd like to draw some.' So he gave me two dollars. The next week I went up for my salary and he said, 'Salary? Did you spend that two bucks already.' That was as far as I went with Big Otto."

Thornton also reported the following: "I broke a wild boar act. That was in 1923. I worked them for one year and in the fall of 1923 I left." When asked how many wild boars there were in the act, Thornton responded, "Five. What I mean they were wild. I worked them in the ring. I had one there - I'd hit him and run. I'd run around the ring and he'd run after me. I'd run behind him and cross over the seat and he'd plant his foot on the box

An elephant and stock car in the Barnes Venice winter quarters in 1918. Pfening Archives.



and bark. I used to think to myself that some day he wasn't going to stop."

Thornton continued, "I tried to train peccaries once. I had five of those. You couldn't keep a collar on 'em. I put a harness on 'em. I had them so they took their seats. One morning I was going to work - I went to put the leash on them, but they threw a fit. I tried to figure what was the matter with 'em . . . then I discovered the harness had them sore under the front leg. Well, that was the finish of that. By the time they healed up the show was ready to open. They were given to the Dallas Zoo. I had those peccaries so they took their seats."

Bobbie Fountain was in charge of the best Side-Show that Barnes had produced in many years, according to the *Billboard* report. Fountain made the openings and the attractions were: Sunshine Musical Act; Billy Pilgrim; Florette's Cockatoos; Frank the Yankee Whittler; J.C. Woods; May, snake enchantress; Eddie Thorne, Punch; Thorne's Magic; Ecquadorian (sic) Brothers; Bismark Ferris; Georgia Minstrels, and the Side Show band with Lola Gonzales, Helen Adams, and Marie Forrest, dancers.

The No 2 Side Show under Red Fowler presented The Newlyweds and Their Baby (midgets), Prince Omar and Cleo, snake enchantress.

From San Francisco the show made the short move to Oakland for two days and then played twelve one-day stands in the general vicinity of San Francisco Bay. After the stands at Sacramento and Auburn the circus jumped to Reno, Nevada, for a two-day stand. There a powerful wind storm leveled the big top and other tents. The weather was a problem as usual on the spring dates in the state. Two additional Nevada dates were completed successfully and then the show played Susanville in California. In a complicated route it returned to Nevada for another three stands and then went into Utah where sparks from a passing locomotive set fire to the canvas covering the dog wagon. This affair occurred a few miles outside of Salt Lake City. After that date the show added Ogden to its route and then went into Idaho. Ten Oregon stands with two days in Portland followed the Idaho run and the show was then set for its Washington tour. Tacoma was a two-day stand and Seattle was a four-day engagement with crowded houses at each performance. A couple of additional Idaho dates interspersed with the eastern Washington route ended the month of June.

The Internal Revenue Department, as usual a thorn in the circus operation, made several new rulings in the spring of 1918 in reference to the collection of tax on admissions. Each ticket wagon was forced to display a sign that stated the price of admission





and (separately) the price of the War Tax. It was no longer permissible to advertise that the admission fee included the War Tax. Furthermore, the Department ruled that: "It must be understood and shown that the public is paying the War Tax."

A second new rule stated that: "The proprietor or duly authorized officer of the show must register within ten days after engaging in business with the Internal Revenue Collector of the district in which the show's headquarters are located, and file with the Collector at the time, or as soon as possible, as schedule of the itinerary covering the season, or if the itinerary is prepared only weekly or monthly in advance, then shall file schedules of such itinerary immediately upon its preparation from time to time."

"Furthermore, a daily record must be kept and reports filed with the Collector at the end of each month." The reader can easily imagine the tightened mouth and furrows on the brow of each circus proprietor when he received these directions. However, in order to ease the headaches and extra work in meeting these directives, and to facilitate the collection and paying of the tax, a booklet could be obtained for \$1.75 from J.M. Roper, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, Washington, D.C. (Comment: This author would like to peruse a copy of Mr. Roper's book, in order to compare it with the complicated instructions issued by the Department within the past few years.)

The Al G. Barnes' Circus played Plains, Montana, on 30 June and continued its route with stands at Hamilton, Missoula, Anaconda, and Butte, which was the Independence Day town. Eight additional Montana dates completed the tour of that state and the show was in Mobridge, South Dakota, on the 13th of July. The following week, through 20 July, the Barnes' Show made South Dakota and Iowa stands. Three additional Iowa towns and three in Minnesota were played the week of 22-27 July, and the next week (ending 3 August) was spent finishing the tour of Minnesota.

Newspaper ad for the Al G. Barnes Circus stand in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1918. Pfening Archives.

Barnes baggage wagons lined up for painting in the Venice winter quarters in 1918. Pfening Archives.

The show returned to Iowa for dates at Waterloo, Oelwein, and New Hampton (5-7 August) and then moved into Wisconsin for four stands. Rock Island, Illinois, was the Monday date, 13 August, with two more Iowa stands

and two Missouri towns preceeding a three-day stand in Kansas City (19-21 August).

For further evidence concerning life on the Barnes' Show at the end of its first decade as a circus the writer will return to the Thornton tapes. Referring to the small male elephants, Bob said: "They used to hook Barney and Vance up to a cross-cut cage, pull 'em around in the spec, and they had Barney on the outside. One day they had a full house with people sitting on the ground, and Barney made a dive after a guy and it was lucky because he had tusks about that long (indicating with his hands) and the man was between the tusks. Well, after that they changed 'em and put Vance on the outside. That was a lucky break. Yeah, he was tough."

Mrs. Thornton intervened with, "Honey, if you remember, Barney wasn't so mean. They used him for the riding tiger and they worked him in the arena."

Bob answered, "He was 'ornery bad, sometimes."

The conversation continued on the subject of blowdowns, and Mrs. Thornton mentioned a photo she had taken at Helena, Montana, of a severe storm. She recalled she had written on the reverse side that occurred in 1917.

Bob picked up the thought and stated, "The top was flopping around and everyone was standing in the middle of the tent. I was underneath the arena wagon. I knew they had the top tied to the wagon and I knew it wasn't going to turn that wagon over."

"One blowdown they had down in Louisiana. That was one of those Gulf storms. They got word that night that the storm would hit about eleven o'clock that night. They hurried the show through and the storm hit about ten o'clock. They had everything out except dropping the tent. They had pulled the wagons around the top and tied off to the wagons beside the stakes. That wind got under the top and took it up in the air and turned six or eight of those wagons over. One of 'em was the dog wagon, and Martha Florine's. She was working leopards and she always took care of the dogs. Rain - it was coming down in buckets. I was on my way to the train and Mar-

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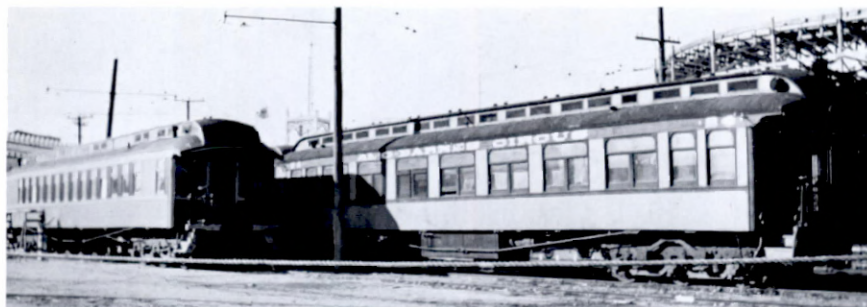
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60

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tha had already gone to the train and I met her on the way back to the lot to see about the dogs. Of course, the dog wagon was turned over but she stayed there with the dogs. Oh, it took until noon the next day to get the wagons turned right side up and get the show loaded. There were so many blow-downs. I don't remember any one particularly."

Then he continued, "When the show was smaller they used to tie everything out to the guy lines. They had a leopard, goats, bears – used to tie 'em all around the show. They had a high wind one time and out in the back the goats tied to the stakes. Well, the stakes pulled and the top was going up and down – like this you know – (he moved his hands and arms) – and when it did the goats went up and down with it. They'd go up and yell 'Whaaaa.' People in the back seats all left. I lost my best goat that way. I had a good buttin' goat; he looked just like the picture on the billboards of that Bock Beer goat. He was a good butter. All you had to do was stoop over and he'd get you. I had him tied out between the menagerie and the big top. Well, three tigers got out. There was a monkey, a high-diving monkey, that was tied on the ladder waiting for his act. I'm working the pig act and the monk ran up and down the ladder and was looking down at the other end and hollering. I looked down to see what he was hollering about and I saw a tiger go under the seats. At the time I thought it was just one. Austin King was standing on the track and I said, 'Here, Austin, take this act. I'll go round up that tiger.' He said, 'Which

Al G. Barnes private car is shown on the left with a sleeper at right in the Venice quarters in 1918. Pfening Archives.

one is next?' I said, 'The spotted one.' It happened that there were three spotted ones, but it didn't make any difference.

"I went out and followed the tiger around under the seats and he went out the front door and the agent, Skinny Dawson, was in the front door. Well, he saw the tiger coming and he went up the center pole in the marquee. The tiger ran out and just as Dawson came down the pole another tiger came along. He went right up again. I rounded those two up. It happened out to the right of the big top. There was a dirt road and a barbed wire fence on each side. They got in that road and were rolling in the dust. Sidney Rink, the elephant trainer, came along with his bull hook and I said, 'Here, Sid, you stand here and just swing your bull hook and keep them there while I go get a cage.'

"Then I discovered there was another one running around. So I got the first two in the cage and I went looking for the third one. He was out in back. He ran between the menagerie and the big top and as he went by he took a swipe at this goat and cut his throat. That was the finish of that goat. We rounded the tiger up and got him back in the cage. It was a funny thing, you know, about this show. There were animals running around

The training barn of the Barnes winter quarters in Venice, Calif., as it looked in the period around 1918. Pfening Archives.



there all the time and nobody got excited and nobody got hurt.

"We had animals that would run around there all the time. The show used to close with a lion act – Louis Roth's lion act – then they had the flag team run around the track... the ten-horse flag team. The lion act is over. The men tore out the chute for the flag team and here came two lions walking out. They walked up the track toward the front door. Bert Dennis yelled, 'That's all right folks. Just sit still.' The lions just stood there and looked at him and the people. Finally, I herded them back into the arena after the men had opened a section. When we went up town after the show the people were saying what a swell show it was with lions running all over the place."

Time to return to the review of the 1918 season. Two pieces of information appeared in *Billboard* at the end of August. The first stated that the Al G. Barnes' Circus would play three days in St. Louis, beginning on Labor Day. It would be the first visit of the Barnes' Show to this city.

Also, a large advertisement was included in this issue: WANTED FOR THE AL G. BARNES' BIG FOUR-RING WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS – Working men in all departments. You can get five months' work here yet this season and spend your winter in Southern Sunny California. Show closes in Southern California in December. Wanted to buy more Elephants, Camels, Zebras, Giraffes and a Hippopotamus. Address per route in *Billboard*."

Three items should be noted concerning the above advertisement. The tour of the mid-west had removed workers from the circus as usual in favor of the grain harvest. Prices for this commodity were far higher than usual because of the war and wages paid to workers were correspondingly increased. Secondly, there was no warning at this date concerning the closing of circus operations throughout the country due to the epidemic of Spanish influenza. Thirdly, the use of the California winter weather as bait – the writer has not seen this used at any earlier date.

After the Kansas City stand the Barnes' Circus played nine Missouri dates while waiting for the opening of the three-day St. Louis stand on 2-4 September. After that, Crystal City, Cape Girardeau, and Poplar Bluff (all Missouri) finished the tour of that state on 7 September. From the 9th until the 23rd of the month the show made stands in Arkansas and then went to Louisiana for a two-week tour. On this run, New Orleans was a two-day stand (28-29 September).

In regards to the St. Louis engagement, *Billboard*, in its 14 September issue, reported that "six perform-



ances and a parade were given all in rainy and cloudy weather, yet at every performance people were turned away. An innovation to the patrons of St. Louis were the many electric fans that kept the holders of the reserved seats comfortable throughout the long performance." Bobby Fountain's Side Show was equally well patronized, with May Blasser, the snake enchantress, the particular bright spot. Included in the performance, and mentioned in the St. Louis report for the first time this season, were four Minute Men and several songs which reminded everyone that the next Liberty Loan should receive undivided attention. Even the elephants did their bit selling War Savings Stamps.

From Lake Charles, Louisiana, the Barnes' Show railed to Beaumont, Texas, for a stand on 8 October. Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth played Beaumont on the 9th. Four stands, Nacogdoches, Jacksonville, Athens and Kaufman preceded the hoped-for Dallas date on the 14th of October, but as noted earlier in this article it never came off. While the show train rolled to Venice over the vast southwestern deserts, Auditor Al Wolffe remained in Texas to pay up the salaried members of the show and settled the bills for the towns contracted but not played.

Regarding that trip to Venice and the flu epidemic Bob Thornton had this to say. "They were sprinkling the streets with disinfectant. They would not allow people to congregate (in Texas). Of course, in those days we had those wooden cars, you know, wooden flats and at every junction we came to they'd back order all the cars. I forget who the fixer was - Al Sands, I believe - he'd go along and do a lot of fixing and they'd wipe it all off and make the next one. Then they'd stop at the next junction and they'd back order all the cars. At that time the depots were filled with cars - coming and going - empty ones and full ones. The only one on the show the got the flu was Bobby Fountain, the side show manager. The show got to Los Angeles and they ordered everybody off the train. They went into Venice and they were waiting there to quarantine them.

"At that time, down in Venice, there was a saloon back on the Speedway called the Hole in the Wall. I went in there to get a drink and Colonel Cummins was sitting there. He said, 'How are you feeling?' I said, 'Not so hot; I feel kind of droopy.' He said, 'I guess you are getting the flu. Get yourself a bottle of whiskey and a bag of onions. Eat the onions and drink the whiskey and tomorrow you will feel O.K.'

"By gum, I did. I bet I ate half a dozen onions. I drank that pint of



A large outdoor billing stand for the Al G. Barnes Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus depicts a horse drawn cart driven by a lady and surrounded by performing dogs. The date of this photo is unknown, but lithos of this type were used in the period of 1917-18. Joe Bradbury Collection.

whiskey. Next morning I didn't know anything, but I never had the flu."

With this antidote for influenza, this article will conclude with some end-of-the-year information from the Venice quarters. A large advertisement appeared in *Billboard* which, under the large title "WANTED" indicated desires for workers and performers for the year 1919. Special emphasis was placed on the need for "an experienced LIGHT MAN to take complete charge

of the electric lighting system." Other notes stated that contracts would be let in a few days for the general work under the direction of Spt. B.J. Bigsbee. "Doc" Webber was scheduled to supervise the making of all costumes for the new spec. Al G. Barnes had placed some acts on the Midway at Venice and sent one to Cuba for a special engagement. Al G. Barnes and Abbott Kinney, the founder of Venice, joined forces in a ranching business near town and could be seen taking turns riding on a string of plows behind six of the Barnes' elephants.

Thus the show quietly prepared for a new season that should proceed smoothly without the problems caused by the two years of wartime handicaps.

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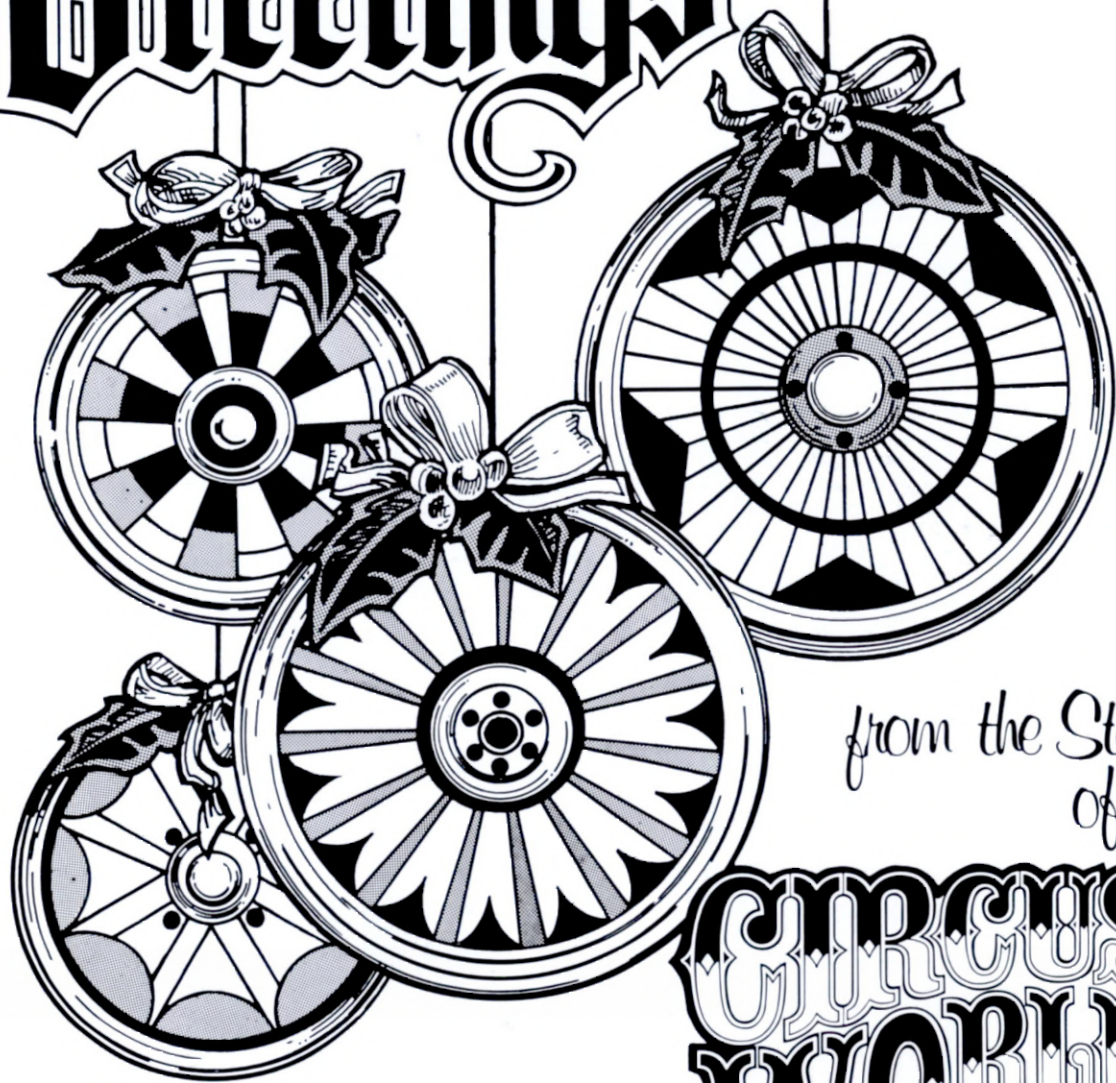


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*Season's Greetings*



# Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

## Images a Hundred Years Later

by Sarah J. Blackstone

*A version of this paper was read at the 1983 Circus Historical Society Convention at Akron, Ohio.*

One hundred years ago William F. Cody began a new entertainment enterprise which became one of the most successful traveling shows ever to appear in the United States. During that first season he billed his show as the Hon. W. F. Cody and Dr. W. F. Carver Rocky Mountain and Prairie Exhibition. At the end of the first season Cody and Carver ended their partnership (less than amicably) by dividing their equipment and assets. Carver began a winter tour and Cody returned to North Platte, Nebraska. By the beginning of the 1884 season, Cody had a new partner named Nate Salsbury. Salsbury was a shrewd business man and sometime actor who had big ideas for the show. The 1884 season was a dismal failure, however, and those big ideas had to be put on the back burner while Cody and Salsbury looked for ways to regain the \$100,000 they had lost. Luckily the following seasons were a great success, and by 1887 the first big ideas had been implemented. In that year the show traveled to England and played before large and enthusiastic crowds all summer. By 1896 an employee of the show (probably the Press Agent John Burke) was so convinced of the Wild West's success that he had this to say:

As time rolls on and the future chroniclers of our day record their annals of events, its [this show's] birth, production, evolution, travels and the incidents of its career will assume an interest far beyond that which the casual observer of the present would suspect. As the treasured histories and traditions of the drama, the circus, the opera and vaudeville of the past becomes subject of the pen, so will come the transcript of "America's National Entertainment," a matter of interest as regards the originators, the cast of characters and the associates connected with its baptism.

There is no doubt that new fashions were begun, new foods introduced to Europeans, and new Western character-types presented to audiences by Buffalo Bill's Wild West. But the overall production, which was billed as genuine and authentic, soon transcended its intention of representing



William F. Cody does his sharpshooting act during a performance of the Buffalo Bill Wild West in 1907. Wyoming State Archives, Museums and Historical Department.

the contemporary Western scene, and created a West based largely on illusion.

The West that Cody wished to portray had passed into history by the time his show became a success. The Indian battles, lonely frontier cabins, and the Pony Express were all events of the past, and had little to do with the on-going process of making the West a functioning part of the United

States. Nonetheless, these events were a part of the very recent past and had a great appeal for audiences. The very fact that the frontier had disappeared was one of the reasons that so many people found the Wild West fascinating.

Cody and members of his company had been present at many of the historically significant battles and other events of the 1800's, and had lived through the day-to-day business of taming the frontier, but the restrictions of theatrical production, including a limited playing space, problems of transportation, and the demands of making messages clear and understandable, transformed this authentic knowledge of actual events into a representation of generic Western incidents. Because of this transformation, audiences saw cowboys without

The Attack on the Deadwood Stage Coach by Indians was a standard feature year after year on the Buffalo Bill show. Wyoming State Archives.





cows, Indians without buffalo, battles where help always arrived in the nick of time, and guns that never killed anyone. The whole bloody and arduous task of taming an unsettled land was romanticized and glorified and the moral questions that that settlement entailed were glossed over and ignored.

Buffalo Bill himself has become a part of this myth. Many of the actual incidents of his life have been romanticized and glorified by so many different writers, movie-makers, and playwrights that even when the truth of an incident has been proven, it can not supplant the story that has grown up around the incident.

Cody was the principal source of many of these stories. Not only did he write four full length, highly exciting (though not highly accurate) books about himself, but allowed his press agents to write inaccurate histories of his life for programs and couriers, and sold his sister's romanticized biography, *The Last of the Scouts*, on the show grounds. He also starred in melodramas supposedly depicting actual events in his life, featured spectacles in his Wild West based on battles he had fought in, and made movies about these same events and battles. While all these dramatizations were based on fact, they were embellished and changed to make them more dramatic and exciting.

Another source of misinformation or exaggeration were the hundreds of dime novels written by many different authors that featured Buffalo Bill, and the colorful and numerous show posters that showed Cody vanquishing Indians, saving passengers from stage coach robbers, and leading people into the promised land. The novels created the impression of a man who could handle any problem, defeat any foe, and win any bet. The posters did nothing to discourage this notion and were, in fact, general enough in the events they depicted to support these notions rather than change them.

Also adding to the myth, were Cody's enemies and debunkers. These people were responsible for the stories that Cody slaughtered buffalo indiscriminately, was always drunk, and was a terrible businessman. These stories too have a grain of truth, but are no more accurate than the ones glorifying Cody.

Movies, television programs, books, articles, poems, plays, and comic books about Buffalo Bill Cody have continued to appear since his death. For instance, between 1923 and 1976, thirty-five movies about Buffalo Bill have been made. Many of these movies are standard Hollywood Westerns with Cody as the hero, but a few try to return this mythical hero to the stature of a real man by questioning the myth, and comparing what Cody



Buffalo Bill leaving the arena at the end of the Grand Entry during a 1907 performance. Wyoming State Archives.

stands for in the Western mythology with what he actually did on the Western frontier.

Whatever Cody's real life was like, it was the mythic figure that audiences loved and that we remember. The combination of his experience in the West, his vast personal charm, and his instinct for showmanship put him squarely in the public eye at a time when the American people were fascinated by the West. He became a symbol for all the best the frontier had to offer—the freedom, the excitement, and the heroism. While the truth about his life is interesting, it is the stories based on that truth that capture our imaginations and assure Cody a permanent place in the American consciousness.

Another important addition to the myth of the American West was the introduction of the character-type of the cowboy. This mythical figure also had a real counterpart who participated in the long drives of the 1850's and who worked the ranches of the West once barbed wire made its appearance, but it was the Wild West that began the process of romanticizing and giving

the cowboy his mythic hero status. Before Buffalo Bill's Wild West the cowboy hero had not appeared in dime novels or other literature.



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Beginning in 1883, Cody featured "cow-boys" in the Wild West. They were shown roping Texas steers, roping and riding wild buffalo, and riding bucking horses. In later years they had an act to themselves ("Cowboy Fun"), and it was these performers who always rescued the stage, the settler's cabin, and the emigrant train from Indians. Leading the group in each of these activities was the Chief of the Cowboys. For the early years of the show this position was filled by Buck Taylor who was billed as "King of the Cowboys." This man not only introduced the concept of a hero cowboy to audiences of the Wild West, but was made the central figure of a series of dime novels by writer Prentiss Ingram. The first novel of this series appeared in 1887 (three years after Taylor first appeared in Cody's show), and the sixth and last in 1891. These were not the first novels to have cowboy characters, but the first to make "one unusually gifted cowboy the hero of a series of related tales." This tradition has been continued by cowboy movie heroes such as Roy Rogers, and by television series such as *The Lone Ranger*.

These cowboy heroes did not spend their time herding cows in either the Wild West or the dime novel. They were portrayed as brave, strong men, the knight-errants of the plains, who



were noble, generous, and always true to their word. They protected women in distress, punished wrong-doers, and made the West a safer place to live. The dull, dirty, back-breaking task of getting the cattle to market was transformed into a bold, colorful, individualistic way of life. Audiences and readers weren't told of frostbite, dust storms, bad food, loneliness, and boredom; they saw men riding freely over the plains, making their own rules, and living their lives as they chose. This mythic figure took precedence over all other pioneer figures associated with the American frontier, and came to exemplify the spirit and freedom of life in the West.

The Wild West also helped to introduce the figure of the pioneer woman into the myth of the American West. Along with a general trend in dime novel literature in the 1880's, Buffalo Bill featured a few women as something more than objects to be rescued as early as 1884. Annie Oakley received star billing as a sharpshooter in this year, and Lillian Smith gained similar billing not long afterwards. By 1887, Georgia Duffy and Dell Ferrel were riding horse races in divided skirts, and that same year the first lady bronc rider appeared with the show. The term "cowgirl" was not coined until 1905 when it was applied to Lucille Mulhall, a rider with the 101 Ranch Show, but the first Western heroines appeared long before this in dime novels, the melodrama, and the Wild West.

Not all the women in the Wild West were featured as female counterparts to the cowboy. In fact, only a very small number of the women with the show were portrayed in this way. There also were the women of the emigrant train who needed to be protected, the women captives taken by the Indians who had to be rescued, and the pretty young ladies who rode the high school horses and performed in the "Virginia Reel on Horseback." Along with these, Indian women were shown moving and establishing their village, Arab women were shown helping to entertain the captives in "The Far East—A Dream of the Orient," and little girls (such as Eva Mudge and Rose Ellis) were shown riding their ponies during various acts.

The heroine of the mythic West was never as clearly established as the hero. Perhaps it was too difficult to reconcile the need for someone for the hero to protect, with the emerging realization that the women of the West had shared equally with the men the dangers and hardships of frontier life, and had emerged quite able to protect themselves. Whatever the reason, both the genteel, passive woman who rode sidesaddle and needed protecting, and the competent, active woman who rode astride and took her



The re-enactment of the Battle of Summit Springs, which was fought on July 11, 1869. The Indians were renegades from the Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapahoes; Buffalo Bill was chief scout for Gen. Carr. Cody is shown on horseback in the center of the photo. Wyoming State Archives.

place beside the cowboy, persisted in the dime novel and the Wild West, and it is these same types that we see perpetuated in modern movies and television programs.

The Indian was as important to the myth of the American West as the cowboy, and the Wild West had its part in shaping this mythic figure as well. The dime novel and other litera-

ture had already established the two principal types of Indians—noble savages and blood-thirsty barbarians—and the Wild West featured examples of both. The structure of the show gave a clear view of these two types of Indians. In their village on the grounds, and while running races or dancing "traditional" dances, the Indian was shown as a noble savage—different, primitive, but basically non-threatening. But during the battle sequences he was depicted as a blood-thirsty barbarian—screaming, shooting, and better off vanquished or dead.

Cody did make some effort to allow his Indians dignity and recognition. The Indians were introduced in groups, each with a chief or leader who was announced by his title. Cody scheduled those events which showed the more noble (or perhaps more realistic) view of Indian life, and he took his Indians to plays and parties wherever he went to allow them greater visibility as peo-

This display of Arabian acrobats, foot juggling, and whirling dervishes was an unusual act. All the photos accompanying this article were taken by J.E. Stimson, as well known Wyoming photographer, in Omaha, Nebraska in 1907. Wyoming State Archives.





ple who could enjoy whatever kind of entertainment was offered them.

But the real contribution that Buffalo Bill's Wild West made to the mythic character of the Indian was the way it firmly established the Plains Indians as the symbol for all American Indians in the minds of an entire generation of Americans.

According to Jack Rennert, author of *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West*:

The very image we have of the American Indian—riding on his pony with feathered headdress—remains with us in Western novels, films, and television, because that was the kind of Indian, the Sioux, which Buffalo Bill's Wild West employed. Apaches wore no feathers and fought mostly on foot, but if they are to be believed as "Indians" in Western films they must get on a horse and put on their war bonnets because that's what we've become accustomed to.

This portrayal of the Indian had more immediate effects upon its audience. An 1894 newspaper clipping reports that "some boys burned Charles Benney at the stake" after seeing the Wild West. The boy died from his wounds.



In fact, the overall portrayal of life in the West had a great impact on youngsters who witnessed the Wild West. On September 10, 1894 a boy shot his brother in the head while trying to copy a sharpshooting trick of Annie Oakley's. These are only two examples out of 80 or so that I found in my research. Even when such emulation did not end in tragedy it was apparently not easy to live with a child who had been to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. The following poem, written in the 1890's, illustrates this point quite well:

#### A Youthful Terror

He has tried to scalp his sister,  
He's lassoed the Thomas cat,  
He has shot my English setter  
And tomahawked my hat.  
He has frightened his poor mother  
Into forty-seven fits,  
He has broken all the ornaments  
Into fifty-seven bits.  
Oh! how I rue the day  
That I was made to go  
And take my son and heir to see  
That wild and Western show.

This type of imitation was extended to include fads in dress and even in snack foods when the show began touring Europe. In Paris everything from buckskin suits to Western bonnets were bought and worn after Cody's first summer there. The Stetson hat, first made popular by Cody, became the fashionable headgear for women, and children took whatever was at hand to imitate the dress of the cowboys and Indians. That same year popcorn was introduced by the Wild West, and five tons of it was sold on the grounds.

Even more remarkable than these brief fads was the response of the German people to the Wild West. The German imagination had already been fueled by the dime novels of Karl May, and Cody's show caused an incredible sensation. The German Army sent

The final act of the 1907 performance was "A Holiday at T-E Ranch in Wyoming." The frontiersman and cowboys assembled for an afternoon of pleasure. Wyoming State Archives.

soldiers to take notes on how the show was moved, set up, and torn down again (some of these methods were used in World War I by the Germans), and hundreds of Western clubs were established to study the West. These clubs are still in operation today, and much time and money is spent each year in preparation for a three-day camp out and council competition

where the Germans "relive the American frontier days in full dress with almost complete historical veracity." Each of these clubs has been collecting Western artifacts since the 1890's, and the members make a great effort to learn Indian ceremonial dances and songs, and the cowboy skills of roping and riding.

Buffalo Bill's Wild West bridges a gap between the original dime novel Westerns of the 1870's, and the movie Westerns that began to appear in the 1920's. It coincided with the final settlement of the Western frontier, and provided a nostalgic look at the adventure of opening and taming the West. It was the antecedent of comic books, radio shows, television programs, and even other Wild West shows. The show introduced the cowboy, the cowgirl, and most importantly Buffalo Bill Cody, into the myth of the American West, and it established the Plains Indian as the symbol for all American Indians in Western iconography.

Seen by millions of people in more than a dozen countries in the thirty years of its existence, the show was a marvel of organization and imagination. Hundreds of performers, staff, and animals were fed, sheltered, and transported each season, and the entire company shared in the difficult task of constructing their performing space, entertaining their audience, and moving their show to a new stand, day after day, year after year. The program of events was a delicate balance of tried events, and new acts added to give the show new life; never quite the same from year to year, and yet somehow familiar and predictable. With the showmanship and personality of Cody, the careful attention to business details by his managers, and the untiring efforts of the publicity department, the show made millions of dollars, and became one of the biggest entertainment enterprises in America.


The major impact of the Wild West was two-fold. First, it supported a myth of the American West that gave expression to some of the cultural ideals of turn-of-the-century Americans and so provided an entertaining show. Secondly, it introduced Americans and Europeans to a new vision of the West, with new character-types, new stories, and new versions of stories already told in other forms, blending this new vision with the picture of the West already formed by dime novels, melodramas, letters, lectures, and brochures, and encouraging further interest in all things Western. Much information about the Wild West has been lost or forgotten, but the images it created, the characters it introduced, and the interest it sparked have become an important part of the European image of America, and of America's image of itself.



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and  
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# THE BIG APPLE CIRCUS

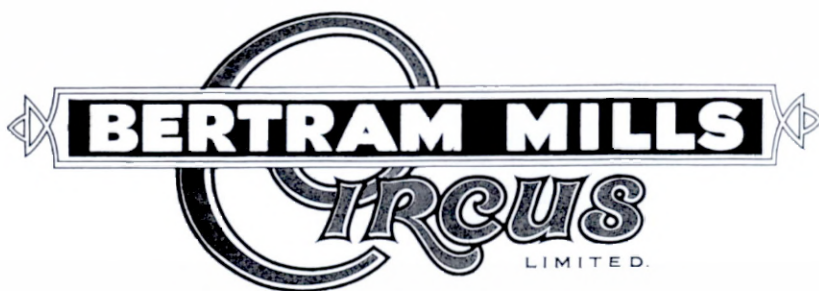


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## Bertram Mills Circus: Rail Travel in Great Britain

By Cyril B. Mills

Having produced Bertram Mills Circus at Olympia, London, a small version of Madison Square Garden, since 1920, we opened our tent circus in 1930, and although we had the most modern European Continental tents, seating, and other equipment of a kind which had never been seen in a circus in Britain, we moved by road as all other British circuses had done.

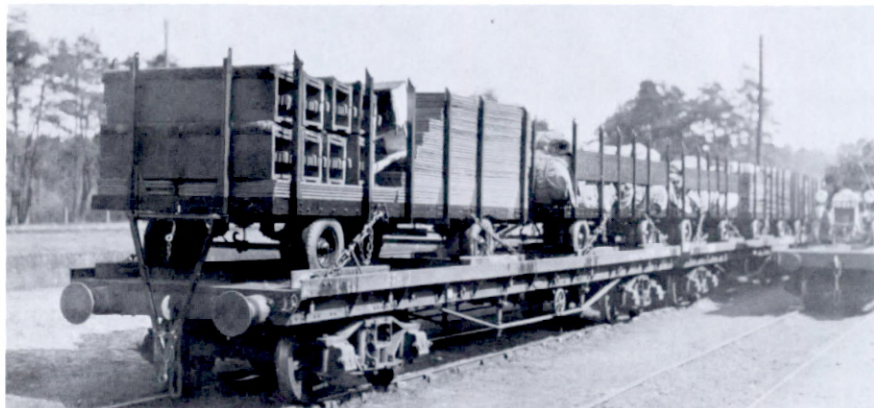
It is only fair to say we economised severely on road transport and as roads in those days were very bad by modern standards, we could only move at week-ends as we were not allowed to play on Sunday. In these circumstances we were only able to play one and two week towns.

During our third summer, 1932, we went to Scotland where business was very good, but the number of towns large enough for us was strictly limited and by this time we had come to the conclusion that if we were to survive we needed to be able to visit smaller towns and particularly to get among the country people where our beautiful Arab horses and other animals would be appreciated more than they were by the masses in the industrial centres. We therefore decided to make an experiment and we visited Perth, then with about 30,000 population,

and Stirling, about 25,000, for three days each in the same week. As the distance between the two towns was only 33 miles, we made the mid-week move without missing the afternoon performance on Thursday, but nobody had closed an eye from Wednesday morning until Thursday night. That was not the sort of thing we would ask our staff to accept even if it happened often with many of the small family circuses. It was obvious to us that the excellent business we had done in both towns indicated that rail travel was the solution to our problem.

We knew that the rolling stock used by Barnum and Bailey both here and on the Continent of Europe had been left here when the circus returned to the States, but a search for the flats revealed that they had been cut up for scrap a few years before. At this point perhaps I should say that even if they had been available I do not think we should have been able to use them as I have recently seen pictures and drawings and they were so long that I do not think they would have been able

**Loaded flats of the Bertram Mills Circus, late 1930s. Note the double pneumatic tires, hold down chains, and distinctive turn buckle. Author's Collection.**



to go through many of the more recently built stations which have been built on sharp curves as they would have fouled our high platforms.

As it turned out we did not have to purchase any railroad rolling stock as the flats which we used belonged to what used to be the Southern Railway, which after nationalisation became the Southern section of British Railways. The horse boxes were available everywhere as were baggage wagons which we converted into sleeping cars for the working staff. The elephant wagon was also a very large baggage wagon which had abnormally heavy springs and iron bars across the windows. I never bothered to ask how it was that any railroad had such a vehicle but I assume it had been adapted for the transport of a zoo elephant at some time. In any event, we had had some experience with railroads as even when we traveled by road all our horses traveled by rail as did the elephants, but in this case the vehicles we used were adapted to normal passenger trains.

At that time our railways had not been nationalised and as we wanted to be able to go everywhere—and that meant through the lowest tunnels on what had been the lines of small private companies—we had to deal with the Railway Clearing House which represented the four big companies which now owned the whole network. I approached the R.C.H. and was told they had plenty of flats about 47'6" long and that they could also supply us with any other type of vehicle which we might need. They warned that for loading the flats Board of Trade Regulations would demand the use of seven strands of 1½" rope at each of the four corners of every trailer and that scotches (which are called chocks in America) would not be allowed to be nailed to the floors of the flats.

It was very obvious that we could not possibly handle the miles of rope in the limited time at our disposal and I was very worried until a few hours later when I decided that one steel chain could be much stronger than seven strands of rope. The remaining problem was how to tighten a chain, but having taken a degree in engineering at Cambridge University I decided this could be done by using the type of turn-buckle which was used for coupling railway vehicles together.

The R.C.H. submitted my proposals to the Board of Trade and they were accepted, but they still insisted on un-nailed scotches in front of and behind every wheel. We therefore decided to scrap all our road vehicles and put everything on rail during the following two summers. All our freight trailers except the king pole wagon were to be 21'6" long and all the closed vehicles (offices, wardrobes, caravans, etc.) should be 24'6" long so that every



flat would take two short trailers or one long and one short one.

In order to be able to pass the tunnel gauge of the old Highland Railway, which we needed to be able to return by the shortest way from Inverness, no vehicle of ours could be more than 7'6" wide and 7'6" high at the eaves. This meant small twin wheels with pneumatic tires on all the freight trailers and equally small single ones for the lighter vehicles. Pneumatic tires everywhere were insisted upon because these vehicles were intended to be in service by the time when hard rubber tires would be illegal. We used the small twin tires in order to get maximum loading space, and I have an idea that we were probably the first circus in the world to use pneumatic tires for even the most up to date circuses in Europe were still on solid rubber tires until about 1955. Small wheels and tires produced a great many problems for us as our towns do not have regular circus grounds like Continental countries and we were nearly always in fields or parks, and getting out of muddy lots was a big problem. In the early days, around 1930, we used caterpillar tractors which we bought in the States before they were available here, but there were many times when we had to be roped out with a steam ploughing engine. After World War II we had splendid David Brown gasoline tractors with their own winches and a pair of these would shift just about anything. We never used performing elephants or horses of any kind for haulage. All of our trailers had to have springs about 50% heavier than was normal as the chains used for holding the vehicles on the flats exerted a downward pull which added considerably to the weight of the trailer and its load.

The fact that the loading space on freight trailers, which you call baggage wagons, was so small meant that everything had to be loaded correctly in accordance with detailed drawings and for this work we had a team of labourers who were well trained loaders to whom everything was carried to by ordinary labourers.

In one way we were very fortunate compared with Barnum and Bailey, Ringling-Barnum and other big railroad shows in the States as every Goods Station had an end-loading dock level with the platforms of the flats. There were therefore no ramps to be built either for loading or unloading. For loading our vehicles were pushed by a small tractor and steered by a man who had a pole which supported the weight of the draw-bar. Four men standing on the ground hooked the holding-down chains into D shackles when the trailer reached the point at which it would travel and then they tightened the chain turn-buckles while



**Bertram Mills show on the lot in 1935, soon after the switch to rails. Pfening Archives.**

the tractor collected the next trailer.

Unloading was a simple drive-off job again using a small tractor to take the vehicles to where they could be picked up by the heavy road tractors as soon as two men had slackened and released the holding down chains. If the end-loading dock in the arrival town faced the wrong way then the three trains with flats had to be taken to a triangle where the trains could be turned to face the opposite direction. To have taken the trailers off going backwards would have been almost impossible. During both loading and unloading a

**The Bertram Mills Circus always published elegant programs. This one for the 1938-1939 Olympia winter season listed the Cristianis, Gargantua, and Emmett Kelly among the features. Pfening Archives.**



locomotive had to stand by either to replace full flats with empty ones or vice versa.

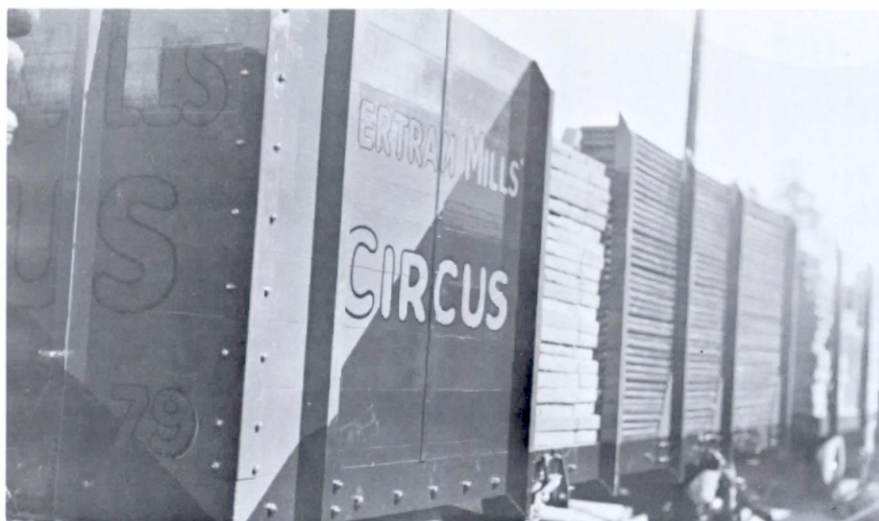
Our horses and other lead stock were never packed together side by side like cattle in huge trucks as is done in Europe; we used what are called horse boxes, short trucks in which three horses stood side by side facing the same way each in what was virtually a padded cell so that it was impossible for an animal to fall during shunting. A small compartment where a groom could travel was adjoining from where he could feed and water the animals on a very long journey. In those days all race horses traveled in this way—it was expensive, but we never had a horse injured during a journey.

We never had more than six elephants and they traveled in what had been a very large baggage van which had specially heavy springs and had been otherwise reinforced as necessary. The horse boxes and the elephant wagon were side loaded from station platforms and the cleansing of all these vehicles was done by railway employees.

When we first went on rails in 1933 we had one train with flats and one with sleeping cars and horse boxes. A second train of flats was added in 1934, and a couple of years later we traveled in four sections as follows:

**The First Train.** Departure time at about the time of the Interval during the last performance. Unloaded immediately on arrival to enable staff mess tent and cook house to be erected and a cooked breakfast ready by the time Train No. 3 arrived. Our cook house kitchen wagons had huge stoves which were so designed that they could remain alight and at full heat during rail travel, and they were therefore ready for service the minute they arrived on the lot. Our refrigerator wagons had what I can only describe as "coldness containers," exactly the opposite of heating radiators. These





enabled the wagon to be disconnected from electric supply for up to 18 hours without ice cream melting or anything in deep freeze to be damaged. This section included two staff kitchens, staff catering department, store wagon, four wild animal wagons, saddler's shop, stable fittings wagon, cage wagon, private office, general office, two box offices, one road tractor, one train unloading tractor.

**The Second Train.** Departure about one hour after the end of the last performance. This train carried two wardrobes, one harness wagon, the catering bar, toilet wagon, wagon with small tents, canvas and poles, ring fence wagon, six seating wagons, one diesel plant, two fencing wagons, stable canvas, and poles wagon. In connection with the catering bar let me say that only ice cream, soft drinks, chocolates, etc. were sold, and sales were only permitted before and after the performance and during the interval.

**The Third Train.** Departure about 30 minutes after the end of the pull down. It included the big top canvas, king pole and quarter pole wagon, side poles, stakes, trailer's workshop, diesel plant, switch room, two artistes dressing rooms, four road tractors, three David Brown winching tractors, three staff sleeping coaches.

**The Fourth Train.** Departure about 8 A.M. according to the length of the journey. It comprised all the horse boxes, the elephant wagon, artiste baggage wagons, and two passenger coaches for any artistes who did not have caravans and for the usherettes who lived in lodgings.

Unless something went wrong all grooms, tentmen, skilled labour and labourers had from five to six hours sleep during move nights, but for tractor drivers the sleeping time was restricted to the period while the train on which they traveled was moving. Their work was done for the day by

**Close-up of property wagon loaded on flat. Author's Collection.**

about 11 A.M. when every vehicle had been correctly positioned on the new site.

As in Europe, artistes who owned caravans hauled them with their cars but all managerial and clerical staff, and the heads of departments traveled by train in caravans provided by the management.

We were able to travel up to 80 miles overnight, and play the matinee at 4:45 the next day. Children were out of school at four o'clock.

We never had a wreck and only one derailment, and I attribute this to the fact that the Board of Trade regulations were severe and observed everywhere. I was often surprised when I saw the way some vehicles were loaded on flats in the States with nothing more than chocks. One baggage wag-

**Cyril Mills, the author of this article, with his show tent in the background in 1952. Photo by Francois Tuefferd.**



on used by the circus during the 1938-1939 winter season was derailed by snow when being shunted in the Goods Yard at Liverpool. At the time we were playing Variety Theatres and having no tent, seating or other tenting equipment to carry we were traveling like a theatrical company in passenger coaches. The elephants traveled in their normal vehicle but the lions had to travel in shifting dens. Everything else was carried in ordinary baggage wagons.

The worst thing we ever had to contend with was the railway strike in 1955. When it began we were due to visit four small towns in Wales for three days each, but we were forced to stay a week in each place and move overland on Sundays. Our own supply of tractors was inadequate so we hired tractors and heavy trucks for towing our trailers from other showmen and anyone else willing to help. We managed to find one huge truck which moved the six fully grown elephants in two journeys each time we moved.

Before the railways were nationalised there were many cases where two companies ran side by side as do the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways. This enabled us to switch from one company to another if somebody made a muddle of our traffic and that kept everyone on their toes. After nationalisation it soon became evident that we were something the railways did not want to know about. Fortunately we had made a great many good friends at the operating level and they did all they could for us, but at headquarters I think we were regarded as a big nuisance.

After we took our show off the road, the rolling stock was returned to the section of British Rail to which it belonged. We did not pay a rent for the use of the vehicles, but every individual type was priced at so much per mile by the shortest route and whenever there was an increase in rates it was expressed as a percentage and was applied to all our rates.



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# Mack MacDonald: 1900–1983

By Fred D. Pfening III

The dean of American elephant trainers is gone. Mack MacDonald, one of the finest bull men in circus history, died September 22, 1983 in San Antonio, Texas, his home for many years. Born November 15, 1900 in Boulder, Colorado, he served as a radio operator in the Navy during World War I, and was later in the Merchant Marine.

Dim job prospects aboard ship led him to the Ringling-Barnum train crew in the mid 1920s, probably 1925. His apprenticeship in the world of pachydermia began a few years later under Cheerful Gardner on various American Circus Corporation shows. In this rough and tumble world the ambitious newcomer learned his craft in a catch-as-catch-can manner as senior men were very protective of their techniques and not disposed to show a First of May the ropes. MacDonald remembered Gardner taking the labels off the elephants' medicine to conceal the proper treatment of some malady from the other men. In spite of his hard-scrabble education, he had fond memories and a high regard for the old railroad show elephant men, particularly Gardner who he considered his mentor.

His first truck trouping was on Ray Rogers' Barnett Bros. Circus in the early or mid 1930's, and soon after he was assistant to Larry Davis on the big Ringling-Barnum herd where he had his initial exposure to African bulls. His tenure with the Big One

Always the sharp dresser, MacDonald poses with Babe on Bailey Bros. in 1947. Peggy MacDonald Collection.



ended abruptly in Scranton, Pa., in June 1938 when a strike sent the show back to quarters.

Next stop was Emporia, Kansas and Bud Anderson's Jungle Oddities Circus. He was in charge of his first herd for Anderson—five elephants. Over the winter of 1939-1940 he trained four bulls for the show, his first solo breaking, and worked them on the road in 1940. Late that year Ray Rogers called him back to re-routine five elephants for his show, now titled Wallace Bros., and as Captain MacDonald he put them through their paces under canvas in 1941. He started with Wallace the next season, but was called back into the service shortly after the opening, and spent the remainder of 1942 and all of 1943 as a radio instructor in the Air Corps. In 1944 he was menagerie superintendent and boss of five bulls for the Clyde Beatty-Russell Bros. Circus, and in 1945 held the same position on the show, now titled Russell Bros. Pan Pacific.

In 1946 he went to Newberry, South Carolina and Big Bob Stevens' Bailey Bros. Circus. That winter he broke Stevens' three punks named Christy, Carrie and Babe, archtypical circus elephant names if there every were any. Two more bulls, Shirley and Tommy, were later added to the herd. Tommy died soon after, and the remaining four comprised the famous Bailey Bros. elephants. MacDonald's reputation as a first rate trainer was established with this fast moving group when they performed on Bailey in 1947. Bill Woodcock, who later handled them, commented that "these little bulls are out of this world," high praise indeed from another experienced elephant hand.

After opening with Bailey in 1948, he joined Mickey Dales' Dales Bros. Circus where he had a wildlife ding show featuring a chimp named Michael. After Dales closed he worked seats for Clyde Bros. on some Shrine dates, while his wife, the former Peggy Henderson of the Juggling Hendersons, performed in the big show.

During an engagement with Clyde Bros. he was approached by Tom Packs about breaking four youngsters from Asia who were about to arrive in New Orleans. MacDonald accepted, and took the green elephants to Sarasota, Florida where in prompt order he put together an act at Captain Heyer's barn. The four—Alice, Jean, Mary, and Penny—won fame and for-

tune as the Tom Packs Baby Elephants. The group worked both Packs and spot dates in 1949 and 1950, and signed on with the Western unit of Polack Bros. Circus for 1951 and 1952. They were better than the fine Bailey herd, and received considerable acclaim. A *Billboard* reviewer raved about them, saying they moved "with the unison of a precision chorus line," and MacDonald himself considered them the finest group he ever handled with neither a deadhead or a lazy lady in the bunch.

Louis Stern, manager of the Polack Western unit, was impressed by his job with the Packs elephants. So impressed, in fact, the he hired him to train six small bulls, and, remarkably, gave him an entire year to do it. MacDonald began work with the six punks in early January 1953 at Louis Goebel's barn near Jungleland in Thousand Oaks California as the "You Asked For It" television show filmed some of the early breaking. It is doubtful if any trainer before or since has been given so much time to develop an act, and it is little wonder that MacDonald considered Stern the finest executive he worked for.

The result was sensational. They were called the Besalou elephants after Bessie Polack, widow of former owner Irving J. Polack, and Louis Stern. MacDonald called them Mary, Jean, Betty, Kathy, Millie and Opal. Critics and the public called them the best elephant act they ever saw.

Peggy MacDonald puts Opal through her paces on Polack Bros. in 1957. Pfening Archives.

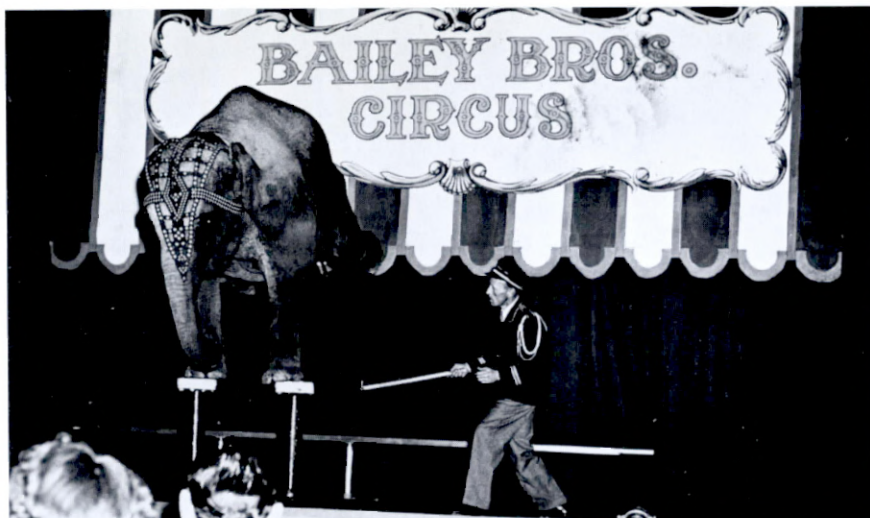




The Besalou elephants' first public performance was a Polack Western unit date in Flint, Michigan on January 17, 1954. With MacDonald working them from the ring's center with both a bull hook and a whip they looked like a liberty horse act, and at one point in the presentation his wife leaped to and from one of them like a bareback rider. The first part of the act featured intricate circling, marching, and counter-marching around the ring—all at double time. Opal was the star of the second half. Tom Parkinson, reviewing for the *Billboard* in March 1954 described the finish: "With aluminum spans similar to the runs of railroad shows, they make a bridge and Opal crosses in a hind leg walk. This is topped when she walks back on her forelegs. Then comes the climax of the act. Standing at one end of the span, she raises her rear right leg, then her front left, and with effort, her left rear. The resulting one foot stand is a winner and a rarity." The act took about thirteen minutes in all, and it was breath taking.

It was the apex of his career, and was one of the finest presentations ever given in a circus ring. Opal, who MacDonald considered the best scholar he ever tutored, was probably the first elephant in this country to accomplish the one foot stand, and was certainly the first to do it on the "Ed Sullivan Show," where the MacDonalds appeared many times. Never one to rest on his laurels, he toyed with the act every year, constantly re-routining the bulls. While the pachyderm personnel changed over the years, the

As his wife and the Besalou elephants look on, MacDonald puts Kippy in the spotlight on Polack at a Fort Wayne, Indiana date in the late 1950s. Peggy MacDonald Collection.



One of the Bailey Bros. elephants does a front leg stand for the studio audience on "Ken Murray's Blackouts," an early television show during the winter of 1947-1948. The MacDonalds appeared on many TV shows during their career. Peggy MacDonald Collection.

Besalou herd was always of the highest quality.

MacDonald retired after Polack's date in Akron, Ohio in April 1965, and bought some acreage near San Antonio where he opened a trailer park. But he couldn't keep away from his beloved elephants, and built a training barn, and eventually purchased some bulls to train in it. He broke and presented three Asian males of his own, and trained many elephants for others, including two African females. Polack called him back briefly to straighten out the Besalou herd after it went haywire, and at a string of Texas Shrine dates in 1970 three of his former students did the one foot stand at the same time. He did his last tent trouping with two of his proteges, Mack and Toto, on the little Hicks Bros. Circus in North Carolina for about two weeks in 1975, and in the spring of 1979 he broke the last elephant of his career for Mel Workmeister and Tommy Donoho. When Mack and Toto were sold to Bill Woodcock, Jr. in February 1980, MacDonald was truly retired.

His barn in San Antonio was a focal point for all elephant men, and they often laid over there to learn from the master. MacDonald credited his success to concentration, patience, persistence, and plain hard work. He was remarkably dedicated to his craft. He studied Evans' book on elephant diseases the way an accountant pores over the tax codes, and he spent hour after hour sitting in his barn observing his charges.

His creativity and his determination to constantly try something new and different made his slogan "We Originate—Others Imitate" a statement of fact rather than bombast. His bulls

were always given new lessons to learn; a MacDonald elephant never left the classroom. In 1954, when the Besalou herd was at its zenith, he confided to another trainer that he was bored with it, and wanted to put together an act with six African bulls. He regretted that he never had the opportunity to do some of the old-time vaudeville elephant acts made famous by Power and others, and near the end of his life told friends that he still had a few ideas he wanted to try.

So the quiet man with the marvelous elephants is gone. His legacy will be his standard of excellence in the ring against which other acts will be measured, and his memory will be recalled whenever show folks and show fans discuss great trainers. But mostly, we will remember him as the fellow who got an elephant to stand on one leg.

My thanks to Ralph Hartman, Tom Parkinson, Greg Parkinson of the Circus World Museum, and especially Peggy MacDonald for background information.

The one foot stand was MacDonald's trademark. Here Dondi held the position long enough to have this photo taken at MacDonald's barn in January 1978. Dondi came to this country in the spring of 1975, and is owned by Phil and Fran Schacht. Peggy MacDonald Collection.





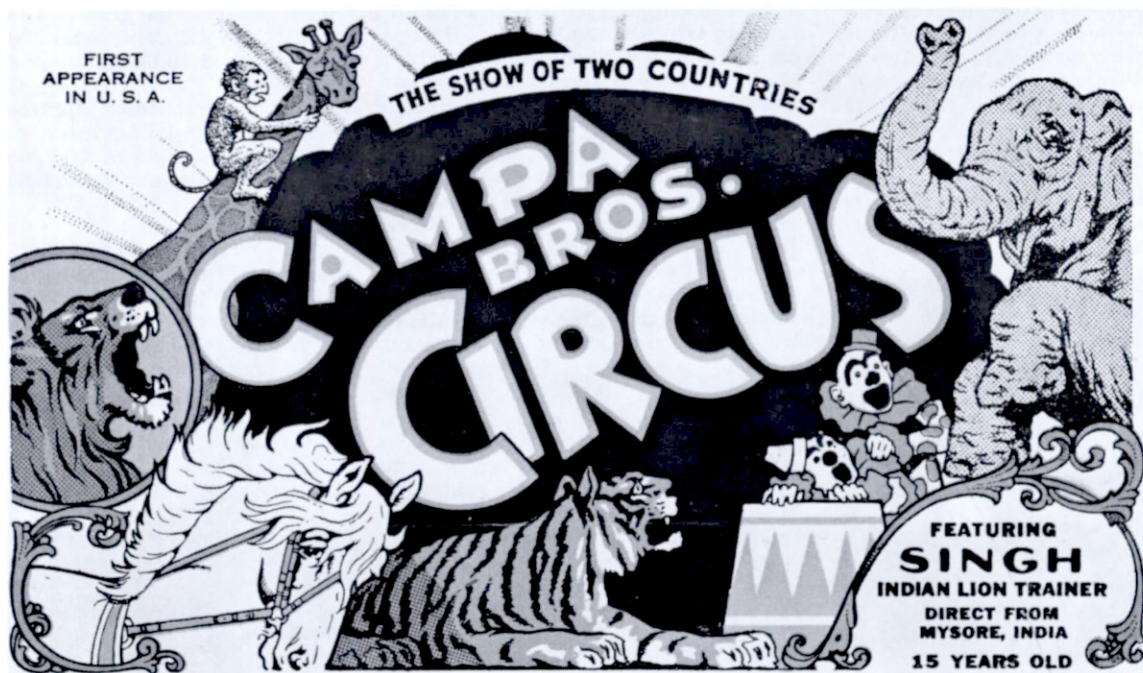


## SEASON'S GREETINGS

Fred. D. Pfening, Jr. Editor



## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



Ben Davenport closed his Dailey Bros. railroad circus at the end of the 1950 season. During the winter the show was converted to trucks and opened in 1951 as Campa Bros. This letterhead was not printed until the close of the 1951 season, and was not used in 1952 as the title was changed to Wallace Bros. Circus. The drawing style, especially the horse and scroll, is clearly Roland Butler's. The title is white outlined in blue on a red background. The scroll, lion and tiger are in orange.



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a magic with that crowd. . . . The  
band struck up a Strauss waltz . . .  
The spotlights went off . . . "Go!"  
. . . . At the top of my swing—just be-  
fore I began to fall away—I felt a  
breathtaking thrill.

Our fingers were buttery slick with  
sweat, and I felt myself slipping away  
from him (papa). Then he lost me. I  
sailed over the upper edge of the net's

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apron, and plummeted . . . I doubled  
my body up into a tuck and twisted.  
I crunched into the two chairs . . . All  
around people screamed and shot to  
their feet. The band stopped playing.

I'm going for that triple, papa . . . to-  
night. I held up three fingers so Papa  
would know it was still a "go". I  
swooped out and up, gaining height.  
Back I swung, then out and up again.  
Releasing the flyerbar I shot up through  
the frame. UNO. DOS. TRES. Papa  
came in and we locked wrists. "The  
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## Supplement

### Robbins Bros Circus, Season of 1931

by Joseph T. Bradbury

Since there was such an abundance of photos available that were taken during the 1931 Robbins Bros. season all could not be printed with the principal article hence these were held over for this supplement. The reason there are so many photos taken this season in comparison to the previous Robbins Bros. tours is probably because the route took the show across New York state and into New England where there were a lot of active circus fans who photographed shows in their areas.

Photo No. 13 in the November-December 1982 *Bandwagon* pictured a tableau-den on Robbins Bros. in 1928. Until now very little had been known concerning the history of the wagon prior to its days with Robbins. It was not known positively if the wagon came to Buchanan from Bridgeport or Baraboo. Thanks to the excellent research into the history of this wagon by Fred Dahlinger Jr. recently we have a considerable amount of information about it. The following account was furnished by him and is presented in his own words.

#### The Indian Rider and Buffalo Tableau Den

By the mid 1890's the Sells Brothers circus had converted from a primarily cross cage menagerie to one incorporating about a dozen fine tableau dens decorated with carved sideboards and corner fixtures. The sub-

ject of this story is one of these dens, nicknamed the "Indian Rider and Buffalo" because of the subject matter depicted on the side panels.

The Indian Rider and Buffalo den's first photographic appearance is in the famous Sells Bros. cage lineup of the mid 1890's. It is the fourth cage from the left, in the back row. (*Bandwagon*, January-February 1964, p. 6.) It is known the cage remained on Sells after the Forepaugh-Sells title change because it appears in the lower right corner of a c. 1900 Frederick Glasier menagerie interior shot. (*White Tops*, July-August 1967, p. 29.) An interesting photograph taken before August 1902 indicates it was a lion cage at the time. The view shows a lion being removed from his parade position atop the Angel tableau by means of an inclined chute and a chain fastened to a ring in his nose. (*Cosmopolitan*, 33, August 1902, p. 375. Also facing p. 224 of W.C. Thompson's *On The Road With A Circus*, 1903.)

After the close of the 1907 Forepaugh-Sells show the show train was split into two parts, one destined for Bridgeport and the other for Baraboo. From later Barnum & Bailey photos it is known this tab den was on the Bridgeport cut. Three photographs place it on Barnum & Bailey in 1908-1909. A Gene Baxter view identified as June 23, 1908, shows it at Utica, N.Y. Another from 1908 shows the right front corner in the background

which appeared in W.C. Thompson's book, *On the Road With a Circus*. Pfening Archives.

of a view of the American tableau (Albert Conover Collection). A menagerie blowdown at Battle Creek, Michigan on August 4, 1909, is the last known photo of it on Barnum & Bailey. (Battle Creek Public Library)

Nothing concerning the wagon's whereabouts is known after 1909 until it appears on the Robbins Bros. train at Newton, Kansas on August 1, 1928. Logically, if it wasn't on the Barnum & Bailey show it would have been in storage at Bridgeport winter-quarters in the intervening years. By the time it was acquired by Fred Buchanan in July 1927, the lower left side panel was gone, as were the name-sake Indian Rider and Buffalo. These may have been removed in the mid 1910's when several Barnum & Bailey tab dens had their central carvings replaced by painted scenes. (These can be seen in the c. 1916 Beggs series of Barnum & Bailey photographs.)

The Forepaugh-Sells and Barnum & Bailey photographs of the wagon show male and female figures adorning the right side corners of the wagon. Whatever figures were originally on the left side were gone when Buchanan received the cage. In their stead were two statues formerly on a Forepaugh-Sells tiger den, known from another Glasier photograph. (*Bandwagon*, July-August 1965, p. 23). The center statue from this same cage was used on Barnum & Bailey cage #99, however these statue switches post-date the 1906 season. The Forepaugh-Sells tiger den is shown intact in a Beggs photograph dated July 9, 1906, Kansas City, Missouri. Although a triple statue cage appears in the c. 1895 Sells outdoor menagerie shot, the original Forepaugh show also had at least one triple statue cage similar to this one, shown in a parade photograph at Bridgeport, Connecticut on July 8, 1890 (Circus World Museum).

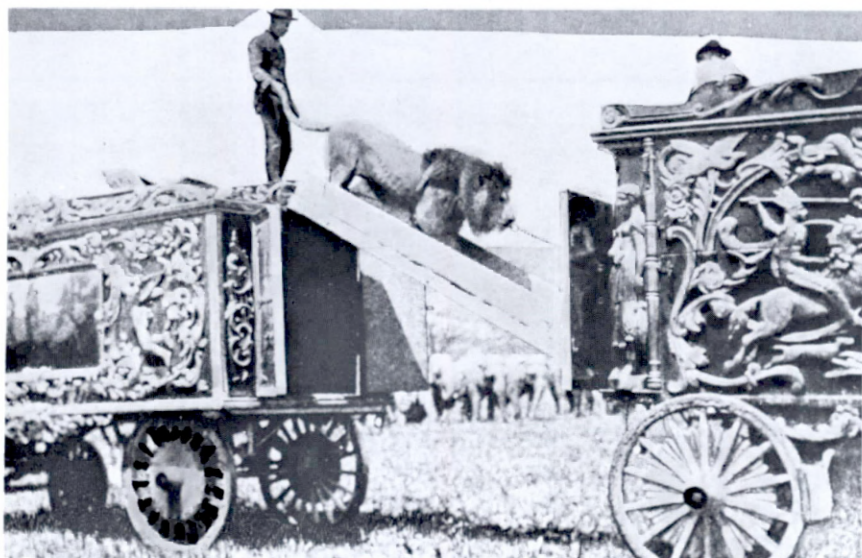
No photographs of the Indian Rider and Buffalo tab den have been found placing it on Robbins after the 1928 tour, and its disposition remains a mystery.

(Best speculation is that this tab-den went with the 10 cars of equipment to the Granger, Iowa quarters in mid-season 1930 when the Robbins train was reduced from 30 to 20 cars; however, although there are photos which show much of this equipment at Granger in later years nowhere to be seen is the Indian Rider and Buffalo Tableau den—JTB.)

#### FRANCE TABLEAU WAGON

CHS Member Bill Brinley has cleared up the matter as to whether or not the France Tableau wagon was on the 1931 Robbins Bros. Circus. It was. Brinley wrote the following:

"I saw the 1931 Robbins Bros. Circus on July 4 in Meriden, Conn. The





France wagon was definitely in the Great Britain, Belgium, Russia, and were painted dark red, blue, green, etc. Russia was red with silver carvings, and the air calliope green with gold pipes and carvings.

"I also remember the big top was

'khaki color,' and fairly new. The menagerie and side show were old. I agree parade in Meriden, along with Africa (often called India or Hippo). I remember the Eiffel Tower painted on the side of the France tableau and Africa was painted dark blue with gold carvings. All of the rest of the wagons

were in the parade, United States, now with the comment by Wes Herwig, the show had a 'rundown look,' however, to myself, a 14 year old boy, Robbins Bros. looked great. We were in a depression and paint and new tents were hard to come by with some shows."



Robbins Bros. cage ready for morning street parade, season of 1931. Pfening Archives.



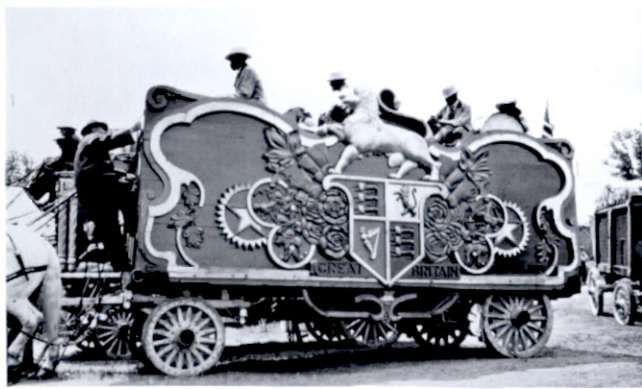
Elephant herd on Robbins Bros. lot ready for street parade, season of 1931. Pfening Archives.



Robbins Bros. lion cage on lot, season of 1931. Pfening Archives.



Robbins Bros. zebra cage on lot, season of 1931. Pfening Archives.

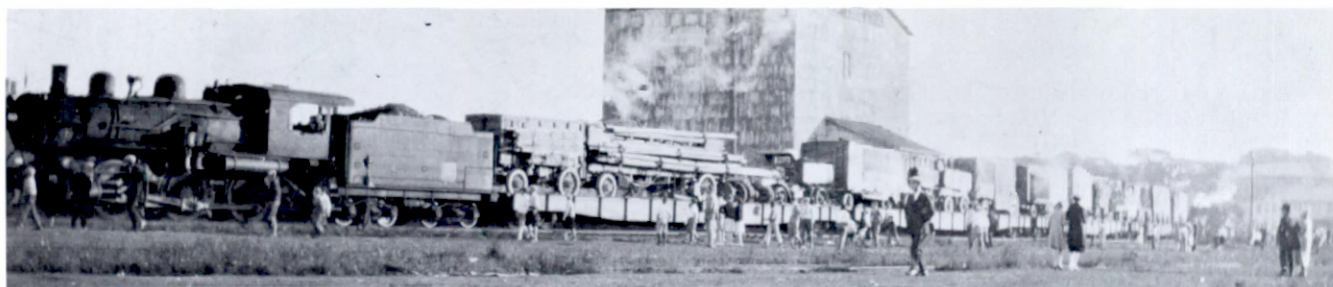


Great Britain tableau used as sideshow bandwagon on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1931. Pfening Archives.



Africa tableau (often called India or Hippo) with six horse hitch on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1931. Pfening Archives.





Robbins Bros. loaded flat cars. Season of either 1930 or 1931. Pfening Archives.



Russia Tableau wagon drawn by six horse hitch in Robbins Bros. street parade at Pawtucket, R.I., June 24, 1931. Photo by John Cutler (Joe Bradbury Collection).



Robbins Bros. cage in street parade at Pawtucket, R.I., June 24, 1931. Photo by John Cutler (Joe Bradbury Collection).



Robbins Bros. cage drawn by four horse hitch in street parade at Hornell, N.Y., June 4, 1931. Photo by W.H. Penoyer (Pfening Archives).



Zebra cage in Robbins Bros. parade at Hornell, N.Y., June 5, 1931. Photo by W.H. Penoyer (Pfening Archives).



Robbins Bros. ticket wagon at the Hall Farm, Lancaster, Mo., fall of 1934. This was the ticket wagon purchased from the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West Show in 1927. At one time it was on the Buffalo Bill show. Joe Bradbury Collection.



China Tableau wagon at the Granger, Iowa quarters in the early 1930's. This wagon, along with others, was sent to Granger when the Robbins Bros. train was reduced from 30 to 20 cars in mid-season 1930. Pfening Archives.



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